UP THE SLOPES OF MOUNT SION

From an oil-painting by Edward Roworth *Photo. by A. Elliott*

Yours most sincerely,
F. C. Kolbe.

Frontispiece

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UP THE SLOPES OF MOUNT SION

OR, A PROGRESS FROM PURITANISM TO CATHOLICISM. *By* MONSIGNOR KOLBE, D.D., D.LITT., *of Cape Town*

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INTRODUCTION

MANY accounts have been written, and many thousands more have remained unwritten, of how from all quarters of the spiritual horizon souls have found their way to the central City of Peace. The phenomenon is quite unique in the story of the world, and is in itself a strong indication of where the Truth lies.

I have often been asked why I have not given my own account, and it is not altogether easy to reply. It is not given to everyone to write autobiography, and the story of a conversion is quite the hardest form of it. So much of the process is subconscious and comes to the surface only afterwards. So much of what is conscious, for and against the movement, cannot be told. In the whirl of the struggle the proportions of things are hard to recognise at the time. If left too long, memory may play us false; if told too soon, the perspective may be out. By keeping silence I have avoided the latter difficulty, and by treasuring a sufficiency of documents I have tried to guard against the former.

But in my case there is an unsurmountable obstacle. The external circumstances of my story are of so intimately personal a character that I cannot speak of them at all except to near friends. and not very much to them. The only way out of this seems to be to isolate the intellectual part of the movement, which, after all, is the only part that concerns other people. And that I propose now to do.

There were many in South Africa, and some of them still remain, who were acquainted with those external circumstances, and out of them formed a theory to account for my passing from Puritanism to Catholicism. This theory I was aware of, but determined to live it down in silence. To this I was the more inclined because I knew that some Catholics, with more curiosity than loyalty to their faith, came to a Protestant relative of mine with the question, "What made Dr. Kolbe become a Catholic?" My relative, with whom I had freely spoken on all such subjects, replied with warm indignation, "From all I know of him, it was from sincere conviction." I thought I might well leave it at that.

But recently I have heard that the story is likely to be told, sympathetically enough, but with an inadequate knowledge of facts, and therefore it seems to me that I ought to be first in the field with the truth. After that, they may make what stories about me they please.

It is now nearly fifty years ago, and it matters little to me what people think about motives so far distant. But if I can connectedly and candidly put down the sequence of mental movements at that time, it will become evident, I hope, that external circumstances were no essential cause, but only provided an opportunity for the real causes to act.

I propose, therefore, to cut out all the personal story except the mental movement from one stage to another, and to tell it in the third person. By so doing, I shall be able to avoid a good deal of the appearance of egotism inherent in all such utterances, especially in English, which, as Louis Veuillot said, is the only language which makes the first personal pronoun a single letter, and that letter a capital. Within these limits I hope my narrative

will keep close enough to the truth to form a really human document without any pretence of complete or minute portraiture.

What follows, therefore, is the story of a person whom we will call X. I shall cull from all my memories just such thoughts and tendencies as seem to me to be relevant, and I do not mean to make the slightest effort to discriminate between natural and supernatural experiences. I take it that all gifts come from our heavenly Father; and if, from some things that I shall record, somebody should say I had a natural predisposition towards the mysteries and mysticism of the Catholic Church, I can only reply that, if so, I am grateful for a natural help without which I should have probably been too feeble to find the truth in this maze of a world.

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UP THE SLOPES OF MOUNT SION

I

Early Influences

Puritan discipline. Of the straitest sect of the Puritans, X. was brought up a Puritan. But it is only when Puritan discipline is administered with scanty affection that it becomes obnoxious to the child. George Herbert knew what he was saying when, with Puritanism all around him, he praised the "*sweet* and virtuous soul." As St Augustine would say, *vigilanti verbo usus est*—he made use of a wide-awake word. Sometimes, when the world hears of some reaction against the sternness of Puritanism, it shrugs its shoulders at "parsons' sons" and talks about "too much religion." There is never too much religion, but sometimes unfortunately there is not enough home affection, or perhaps I should say such affection is too stoically suppressed. At any rate, strictness and all, X. had a surpassingly happy childhood. Punishment from the mother's hand, and restrictions from the mother's law, were so obviously, even to the child himself, and at the moment, subordinated to a boundless mother-love, that he had and has no temptation to complain. He has nothing but gratitude to his parents for their discipline, and nothing but gratitude to his heavenly Father for introducing him into life amid surroundings so sweet.

Early love of Beauty. He was a somewhat precocious child, and was presented with a Bible on his fourth birthday because he could read it. As far back as he can remember, and that is to the age of five, he has been a passionate lover of the beautiful, spiritual, visible, or audible. The melodies of his childhood are his favourites still, and thanks to his father's good taste they are worthy so to remain. The valley of the Paarl is still to him the loveliest on earth, and the flowers that grow round the Paarl Rock arouse in him an enthusiasm which he still feels, but remembers more than feels. At the age of eight or nine he voluntarily learned by heart St Paul's glorious Ode to Charity (1 Cor. xiii) for sheer love of its beauty: this judgement remains with him unchanged.

Early reading. To his early days all fairy stories, and indeed all fictional stories of any kind, were forbidden. Perhaps that is why he can still read children's books with delight. His mind was never allowed to become blasé. He enjoyed the Scripture stories all the more, and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* became to him an enchanted dream. He carried the book about with him in the daytime while the craze was on, and slept with it under his pillow at night. He still has that little book, and now and then revivifies the old glamour with a glance at its crude early Victorian woodcuts. And again his old age ratifies the child's judgement, and Bunyan, in spite of his weird distortions of the spiritual life, retains his place among the most favoured few.

From an old daguerreotype *Photo. by A. Elliott*

AT THE AGE OF FOUR, WITH HIS MOTHER

To face page 3

II

Germs of Changes to Come

The strict Sabbath. Sunday (or the Sabbath, as they called it) was of course a day of strict observance; but it was not unwelcome. Church services to X. were full of interest. The full-throated singing of the hymns in four parts by the congregation (the dear coloured people of the Paarl) was always a delight, and he liked his father's sermons (in Dutch, of course); and when the service was over the old ayahs always made much of "Master Freddy." Then the whole day had a kind of ritual about it—the Sunday clothes, the peaceful rest, and even the dish of sweetened yellow rice with raisins in it had a sacred flavour. He could not read his pet *Hiawatha* or any other secular book, but religious books abounded, and if some of the goody-goody ones were non-natural and rather jejune, they often made up for it by unconscious humour. There never was a book that he could not make something of.

The still stricter grandmother. It was different at his grandmother's house. Her religion was of the stern variety. Almost everything the children loved to do seemed to be wicked. It was a settled principle with her that children and young people generally should be habitually snubbed to prevent their becoming proud. She was never gentle except in case of illness, theirs or her own. She suffered terribly from gout (in spite of almost penitential abstemiousness), and if ever to their surprise, they themselves being quite well, she suddenly became indulgently sweet, they knew that

gout had begun. She was like that old Admiral of whom one of his sailors said they always knew there was going to be a stiff fight because old So-and-so became so b—— polite. But usually she made religion unlovely, and her very presence was massively oppressive. Visits there, however, were only rare episodes. And even if these experiences were somewhat strenuous, X. always enjoyed the humour of them afterwards.

Early introspection.

His sense of humour was always very keen, and led him into lots of trouble in his subsequent schooldays. On one occasion in the family circle (he was sitting on an upturned box, being about seven years old at the time) something happened or was said that struck him as so exquisitely funny that he broke into a fit of laughter which to his amazement and bewilderment and utter humiliation ended in violent hysterical tears. When they gathered round him to console him, he was so ashamed that he almost automatically concocted a lie to explain the awful phenomenon. He said a nail in the box had hurt him. Fortunately, they did not examine the box, or the lie would have been severely punished. But it was hardly more than involuntary; as Mark Twain would say, he was in such a tight place that he had to lie. Nevertheless that lie lay heavy on his conscience, but not so heavy as that mysterious experience which had upset his balance and made him do the very opposite of what he intended. He went over it again and again in his mind. How and when and why had laughter turned into sobs? He has disliked unrestrained laughter ever since, and soon found that he could enjoy a joke quite as well without screaming. It is a trivial incident, but it is quoted to show that at so early an age he was already beginning the practice of introspection and already turning reflection into permanent

profit. Thus it has a remote relevance to his present subject.

Early Catholic yearning thwarted.

The first shock that disturbed the serenity of his religious life came at about the age of eight. He has data for these dates. He found a book new to him lying on the table; there was no danger-signal; it was a religious book; it belonged to his uncle who was a missionary; therefore it was not on his *index expurgatorius*. Opening it, he found that it told of the deaths of St Peter, St Paul, St Andrew, St Thomas, St Bartholomew, and others of the Apostles. He was fired with enthusiasm. Then there was something to be known about the Early Church outside of the Bible. Why had he not known this before? He was drinking it in with breathless eagerness, when in came his mother. The book was snatched from him, he was violently scolded and severely punished. He pondered sadly over this. He dared not enquire: children then were not allowed to ask why. It was not his mother's usual way, so he was completely baffled. Now he knows that anti-Catholic prejudice had cast its shadow over him for the first time, and that it hurt. The poor child could not, of course, analyse or follow out the reasoning, but the impression was a strong one. From some unintelligible cause, his religion was antagonistic to Early Church History. His enthusiastic curiosity, thus nipped in the bud, went into abeyance for want of nourishment, only to revive and burst into flame many years afterwards. He was left merely with a vague uneasiness. It was the little rift within the lute. It was a germ destined to vigorous development in the hereafter.

The joys and sorrows and perplexities of children may seem small to grown-up people, but they must remember that the children are also small, and things keep their proportions.

Early desire for Christian ministry.

It was in this same year that he made the resolve to preach the Word of God he loved so well. He even broke out into poetry about it. The technique of his verse was far inferior to the spirit of it. He made *tell* rhyme to *Gospel*. His elder brother chaffed him unmercifully about it, but his mother (God bless her, and forgive her!) defended him. His victory was tasteless, for in his heart he knew his brother was right. Long years afterwards he found to his amusement that the rhyming of an accented syllable with an unaccented was one of the Elizabethan experiments in prosody: George Peele was fond of it. But though the rhyme was, let us say, early Elizabethan, the enthusiasm was permanent. It was no mere child fancy. Never in his life has he been without some big enthusiasm. Sometimes too many of them together. This present one went into the background for a while through boyish restlessness. But at the age of seventeen it revived, only to be blocked by the unsolved problem, what was he to teach? He knows now, but he lost his way then, and for some years sadly laid aside his infant resolve. Never could he be content to go into any pulpit to preach uncertainties. A new set of circumstances arose when at the age of nine he was sent to school in England, and school-life proved to be very varied in its influences.

III

School

Advantages of school.

At the age of nine X. was sent to school in England. It widened his horizon at a critical time and had a strong influence on his development. Being something of a mother's boy and somewhat susceptible to the emotional side of Evangelicalism, he was already in danger of turning out a little prig. He remembers with a shudder several experiences in that direction. Moreover, the secluded home-life offered few opportunities of wholesome collisions with other boys. The average boy hates namby-pamby ways and does not allow his fellows to "put on side." In addition to this, he was very near-sighted, and, though healthy enough, not physically strong; his mother's anxieties would therefore have restrained him from a good deal of sport and adventure. He was often bowled out at cricket without having even seen the ball, which might just as well have hit his head as the wicket; and at hockey he used to hear the solid indiarubber ball whizz past his ears with an ominous hum. But he learned not to show fear, and took his part in everything that was going, mischief and all. The rules of the school did not seem to the young rogues to involve any moral obligation; they were just penal laws, and when the penalties came, it was a schoolboy virtue to meet them with Spartan fortitude. Masters were regarded in a spirit of armed neutrality, friendly if they were genial and just, silently hostile otherwise. It was not an ideal state of things, but it was a tonic to independence of character.

Early lesson in tolerance.

On the voyage to England he learned one lesson for life. Among the passengers was a Jewish family of strict observance, and in that family X. found a friend of his own age. With both of them religion was first and foremost, so they sometimes clashed. It was something of a surprise, almost a shock, that one who was not even a Christian should be evidently a child of grace. He readily admitted that this little Jewish friend was a better boy than himself. Their controversy came to a head over the Sabbath. On Friday evening the family retired to their cabin for their devotions and were seen no more. On Saturday the boys abstained from play out of respect for the Jewish tradition, and on Sunday out of respect for the Puritan tradition. So far they agreed, though two days out of the week formed a heavy tax. But when the stars came out on Saturday evening, the Jew announced that his Sabbath was over, and they indulged in an orgy of play—a sort of oasis between the two Sabbaths. Then when the stars came out on Sunday, there was a demand for another orgy. But little X. stood firm, and declared that his Sabbath was from midnight to midnight. It was a hot controversy, and eventually they decided to refer it to an old soldier whom both of them loved. He listened to the two little pleaders with portentous gravity, and then gave his decision. "Ah, tut, tut! silly boys; go away and play all Saturday and all Sunday as well." Both were profoundly shocked, but lovingly agreed to respect each other's custom. And thus X. learned to combine practical love and tolerance with inflexible adhesion to principle. It seems a simple lesson, but when he remembers how many he has met who have never learned it, he is grateful, even after sixty years, to that childish friendship which taught it to him. From that day he has

always been ready to place himself at the other person's point of view, and has always had a soft spot in his heart for the people of Israel.

Character of the school. The school he went to was the School for Sons of Missionaries at Blackheath (now moved to Eltham). It was a good school. He does not want to represent it as a Paradise of young plaster saints, but all the boys came from homes of prayer and self-sacrifice, and were on the whole not unfaithful to their upbringing. Most boys said their morning and night prayers at their bedside, and those who did not respected the custom. The public opinion of the school (always far more potent than masters' authority) was healthy on two strong points. No boy was allowed to lie to the masters, and swear-words were banned. An amusing scene occurred once when a new boy uttered a big, big D. He was immediately thrashed in the playground. With an air of injured innocence he said: "What's all the row about? I only said 'damn.'" Whereupon he was thrashed again for repeating it, and the obnoxious word was heard no more.

Bad marks. It is sad to relate that X. was in very bad odour with the head master. With his own form master he was a favourite, but the bad marks went down all the same, and it was the black book alone that counted with the head. The state of things can be gathered from a plea he put in one day. He went to his master and said: "Do you think it is fair, Mr. Bull? Nearly all my bad marks come from talking at preparation. I have nothing to do, and I can't help talking. Whenever you hear anything you look at me. The other boys can see when you are going to look, but I can't; so I get caught every time. Don't you think it would be fair to halve my marks every week?" Mr. Bull smiled sympathetically, but the bad marks

went on, and at headquarters X. became the champion naughty boy of the school. It was fundamentally unjust and he felt it. He got through his work in half the time, and no other books were allowed at preparation. They had nothing to do but give him books to read—he was athirst for reading—and his record in the black book would have been almost a blank. I say "almost," for there were always the "larks," and he joined in every lark, and the more audacious the lark, the more heartily he joined for the honour of boyhood. And he was generally caught. One year the head refused on the score of conduct to allow him to pass up to what we should now call the next standard, though he was top of his class. Has there ever been a more idiotic punishment? It resulted in much worse conduct, but with a much improved black list. Nepos was now child's play to him, but it was Greek to all the rest of the class. So he spent his preparation time in writing out thirteen translations of the set work, all different; keeping the best for himself, he passed the others down surreptitiously. The master never found out why that particular class was so uniformly good at Latin translation, and for X. it was first-rate exercise in English composition. Morally, however, it was certainly bad.

Catching up.

Another thing he did to counteract that year of retardation. His former compeers were now learning Greek; he would do the same. He went to one of the big boys, who is now Sir John Sale, an eminent judge in India. "Will you teach me Greek?" he asked. Sale looked keenly at him to see if he was in earnest. "Yes, young 'un," he replied, "if you accept my conditions." Conditions were eagerly accepted. "Your first lesson is to say the Greek alphabet in five seconds: whacking every time you fail." It

was a tough job; let anyone try it. There was failure at first, of course, and the whackings were genially but soundly inflicted, and gratefully and stoically endured. After the third he said his lesson in four and a half seconds, and to his amusement he finds on trial that he can so say it still. Plain sailing followed, and no further whackings were necessary. The difficulty was to find time for the learning; play-time was precious, and a Greek grammar would not have been allowed at preparation time. But he carried it about with him and utilised odd moments. Then a brilliant inspiration struck him. There was a cruel punishment in vogue for a particular breach of discipline: it was to stand for an hour on the cold stone floor of a draughty passage under the clock. X. used to finish his school work, and then deliberately commit that breach of discipline. Out he would go with his precious grammar, and stamp and shiver on the cold floor while he learned his declensions, comparisons, and conjugations. At the end of the year a new head master came in (it was the old one who had not known Joseph), one who would rather study his boys than punish them. In his initial survey of the school, he came to X.'s class, and with a wistful look he said: "Why are you down here? If you only knew a little Greek, I would put you right over the next class into the year beyond." Then came the reward of drudgery. "But I do know a little Greek, sir." He was put through his paces and emerged with credit. "Where in the world did you learn your Greek?" "Under the clock, sir." So he jumped a year. Thenceforward there was no question of conduct: his mental powers were fully stretched. The new head took the Classics himself and delighted in stimulating and drawing forth the boys' reasoning powers, and the mathematical teacher was an

enthusiast whose favourite reward was to give a stiff problem in algebra or trigonometry to willing pupils to be done out of school hours. School became a continuous joy.

All this seems to have little direct bearing on religion, but there are subtle relations which are to be felt rather than expressed. X. thinks of this when in the Liturgy the fine prayer comes round, "that by thy grace we may *conquer* those things which we have to suffer for our sins."

IV

Holidays at School

Sermons: Sunday exercises at school during the holidays included learning hymns by rote and sometimes writing abstracts of the sermons heard. Both were anti-religious in tendency. The sermons were long, rambling, disconnected streaks of dulness. There was much patient waiting for the end, but no interest whatever. It was impossible for a boy to summarise them, and the attempt inspired nothing but disgust. Nothing of them remains in X.'s memory but one touch of unconscious humour. The minister tried to encourage his hearers' patience to further effort by beginning the later paragraphs with such hopeful words as "Finally, my dear brethren," "To sum it all up in brief," "Let us now draw to an end," etc. He would use four or five such phrases in a single sermon, and after a while they ceased even to hint a hope. The boys used to count them, and smile at each other: "No, not yet." The only phrase he used which really counted was "One word more." It was always his last, whatever the previous order had been: the boys then used to heave a deep sigh of relief, sometimes audible, for they knew that the dreary job would be over within five minutes. The "reports" of those sermons were among X.'s worst failures in school, and it was accounted to him for unrighteousness.

And hymns. Even more disastrous was the learning of hymns. X. never could learn anything that was not rational or beautiful, and the few hymns that had those qualities were naturally

the most frequently used, and therefore already familiar, and therefore never set. The samples used for this soul-deadening exercise were neither poetry nor doctrine, and X. simply could not learn them. Seeing how easily he learned many other things, this was put down to sheer obstinacy. The more he was scolded and punished, the more unlearnable the hateful things became. He did not know the reason, of course, but his teachers should have known. It was the same with some secular school subjects: lists of names in geography, lists of dates in history, lists of exceptions in grammar, slipped off his memory like water off a duck's back; there was no reason in them and no beauty. It was a pity to load a boy's mind with so amorphous a presentation of a subject which is so essentially full of Truth and Beauty as Christian doctrine.

Poetical attempts.

Not even this, however, could turn X.'s mind from love of religion. There was always the Bible. He could learn a psalm if he could not learn a hymn. He could not indeed retain in his memory the due order of the Kings of Israel, but the imagery of the Prophets and of the Revelation of St John were a never-failing delight. He once laboriously turned the whole of the Prophecy of Amos into "poetry." Many such effusions went down into the capacious waste-paper basket of humanity, but they did more for him than any of his school tasks; they kept his eyes upward towards the Ideal.

Prayer-meeting.

It must be recorded here that there was in the school a private association for prayer—what in a Catholic school would be called a Sodality. X. joined it, and was the youngest member of it. They followed the usual ritual of the prayer-meetings of their elders—the reading of a passage or passages of Scripture, some comment or exhortation based upon this, a

hymn sung, and two or three of the members called upon to offer extempore prayer. Puritans would probably object to the word "ritual": they are under the impression that, having abolished a Liturgy, they have thereby abolished formalism. It is a mistake; nothing could exceed the threadbare formalism of the average prayer-meeting. But X. knew no other form of openly worshipping God, and, small as he was, he would not hold aloof from anything that was intended for God's service. They were very sincere, those boys, and did their little best. One day poor X. was called upon to offer prayer. A sense of awe gripped his heart, a lump rose in his throat; glib as he was on other occasions, nothing could he utter but a few stammering, incoherent words, and then—collapse. Somebody else had to take it up. He was not ashamed. He understood what had happened. Beyond the forms of prayer sacred to him from babyhood, and beyond the prayers in the Psalms, his own devotions had been wordless. Yearnings of the heart, gropings after Truth, feelings for Supreme Beauty, why try to put them into words? What avails the difficult search for the appropriate expression when we are addressing Omniscience? He always felt tongue-tied face to face with Infinitude.

Inconsistencies.

One day the head boy drew him aside and reproached him for the inconsistency of belonging to the prayer-meeting and at the same time being so prominent on the black list. He should give a better example to the other boys—speaking of them as if they were a set of godless barbarians. X. was rather surprised, for he never regarded his school peccadilloes as real sins: why should not one laugh and talk in otherwise idle moments, and yet try to love God? And as for "example," it was a new view to him. He had never thought of himself as an example. He said

nothing, but felt that he did not want to be a Pharisee. For the bad marks he expressed more contrition than he felt, and promised amendment. And indeed soon after that he made an heroic effort, and for a whole week abstained from the very appearance of evil, just to show that it could be done. When the list was read out that week, the headmaster read calmly till he came to "X. junior, 0." He was electrified. He took off his spectacles, rubbed them, then looked again, and said before the whole school, "Mr. Bull, there's a mistake here." X. rose in his place, and proudly said: "No, sir, no mistake." The next week he was once more standing on the form as a *pessimus*. Still, he stuck to the prayer-meeting, and is glad he did.

A cruel punishment.

As all their parents lived thousands of miles away, many of the boys had to spend their holidays at the school. One Christmas Day stands out in X.'s memory with tragic emphasis. The morning before, he and another boy asked leave to go for a long walk. It was granted. They took the Old Kent Road and, drawn by the ever-increasing interest, made their way right into the City and reached St Paul's. They arrived home again after 2 p.m. The headmaster met them at the door, and, being in a good humour, smiled and said: "Well, you have been for a long walk with a vengeance." The matron, however, annoyed at having to provide an extra meal, made it out as an enormous offence. The next morning it was announced that they were to be punished. All the boys had been invited out by kind friends, but these two were kept in. They were placed in a cold room, no fire in the grate though the day was frosty; a plentiful supply of cold slates was given to them, and they were told to write the numbers from 9,000 to 11,000, without

any abbreviations. They thought half an hour or so would suffice for that, and then they should be free to go where they had been invited. No such luck. As the master closed the door, the boys heard the key turned in the lock. Silence settled over the house, and then they realised that everybody had gone out for Christmas festivities and they were prisoners for an unknown time. They started work, but soon their fingers were too benumbed to hold the pencil, and they were hypnotised with the deadly monotony of their task. They jumped and threw things about, making as much noise as possible, hoping to provoke somebody to come and give them a thrashing and have done with it. But there was no one to hear. Hours passed by, and at last, when everybody else's enjoyment was over, somebody came and released two little wretches, almost maddened with the injustice and cruelty, and starved with cold and hunger. It was a fiendish punishment for an act which was no offence at all, and which, if it had been, had at first been condoned. Such treatment of lads, little more than babes, on the birthday of the Babe of Bethlehem, seemed to be almost incredible; yet it was inflicted by a woman, one with a great reputation for Christian piety. Those two boys could readily have been convinced of the doctrine of total depravity even in the elect. It could easily have turned a good boy to the bad; and as it was it rankled in their minds for a very long time. Fortunately, however, other influences supervened, and a boy's nature is very elastic.

V

Holidays away from School

Calvinism: During his five years in England, X. spent two Christmas holidays along with his brother at Reading, and two midsummers by himself at Norwich.

They were invited to Reading by relatives. It was X.'s first introduction to Anglicanism. The type was new to him: not typical at all, some will say, but this type, though now dwindling, certainly existed and still exists. It was that of ultra-Calvinism. With one form of Calvinism in its operation on home life X. was of course already familiar from his experience of Boer households, and for a boy home life is the most important, in fact the only, means of measurement. Theoretically both forms of Calvinism may agree on the doctrines of total depravity as the result of original sin, and predestination to eternal wrath. The difference lies in the application. The Calvinism of the Paarl left the measure of depravity and the scrutiny of destiny in the hands of God: that of Reading placed the measure and the scrutiny in the hands of man—with deplorable results.

An Anglican variety. The family at Reading consisted of the grandmother, the parents, and three boys. X. and his brother brought the total up to eight. The father was a crippled invalid, whose infirmities might have excused his temper if his dour religion had not emphasised and exasperated it. He certainly had a fine capacity for wrath. X. knew him once to lash himself into a fury over the question why David had written two psalms

exactly the same. It was David he was angry with, nobody else. The mother was severe and just, and quite kind withal, though not genial. Still she made the two little visitors instinctively feel that, having been invited by the grandmother and not by herself, they were not altogether welcome. This was not to be wondered at, for she was a good housewife and two untidy boys extra must have been something of a trial. The grandmother was a large person with a voice of corresponding magnitude which she could not control because she was almost stone deaf. Her heart set up no Calvinistic barriers. She was solemnly cheerful and (not understanding boys) even aggressively kind. X. reveres her memory with gratitude. She seemed totally unconscious of the gloom around her, though indeed the others were not as considerate towards her as might have been expected from the lofty standard they imposed on everybody else. Sometimes, when one or more of the boys were being currycombed for their souls' good, she used suddenly, to X.'s intense delight, to boom forth a casual remark of ponderous optimism and startling irrelevance. They all smiled at her, at least the boys did, and then she would resume her knitting and the harrowing process was continued.

Alleviations.

Yet, of course, five healthy boys could not be quite oppressed with gloom when the weather was fine and frosty and the ice bearing. Moreover, sometimes, when visitors came, they condescended to play games. The only card game allowed was Pope Joan, probably for the anti-Papist sound of its name. X. knew nothing about the Pope Joan fable, and has forgotten all about the game itself, except for an uncanny streak of luck that came to his share. The nine of diamonds was the supreme card, giving the pool and all the stakes (counters only, of course)

to the holder. On one occasion, though there was only one pack of cards and there were about ten people playing, he got the nine of diamonds five times running, the chance of this being about one in fifteen thousand millions.

Later results.

After the second Christmas the grandmother died and the two boys were invited no more. They were not distressed about this, for except for the skating they really preferred the cold and dreary old school with its many comrades and games. Some nine or ten years afterwards X. revisited that family and found that dark Calvinism had completely got the upper hand. The youngest boy had grown into his fetters, or rather the fetters had grown into him and transformed him into a complete prig and Pharisee. The middle boy, unable to endure the life, had gone away to sea, and the eldest (really the best of them all) was under the ban as irrevocably a vessel of wrath. As a matter of fact, X. (not yet a Catholic) had passed through the experience of what Protestants call "being converted," and therefore on their own principles they should have counted him among the "elect." But they knew nothing about him and just damned him on the off-chance. They based their version of God's judgement on his obvious sympathy with their black sheep, but he sealed his own doom by innocently asking if smoking were allowed. They seemed to regard tobacco smoke as the fumes of the bottomless pit. They severely returned for answer that Edward was the only one in that house who smoked, and he was allowed to smoke only in the conservatory. Besides, they somewhat feebly added, it was good for the plants. So the one lost soul who would not believe in his condemnation went to the conservatory to comfort the other lost soul who did. Consolation, however, was impossible: a pall of melancholy had

settled on that cheerless life, and X. was not surprised to hear not long afterwards that poor Edward had been driven out to die in a mental asylum. So much for the man-applied doctrines of depravity and predestination. Later on X. came across a similar case, where the young reprobate was a buoyant specimen of that charming variety of the human race, a cheerful idiot. He accepted his lot of man-inflicted eternal punishment, and used to say with a winning smile, "I'm a believer, you know, not a partaker." Doubtless these two good lads found their heavenly Father more merciful than their earthly parents.

Common and extempore prayer.

One thing, however, X. learned at Reading—a love for the beauty of the Anglican Common Prayer. He did not know at the time that it was mainly a partial adaptation and translation into Elizabethan English of the Catholic Liturgy. He took it as it stood, and found it an immense improvement on extempore prayer.

There is much more difference in the practice of extempore prayer among the Puritans themselves than they usually admit. It was naïvely stated not long ago at a gathering of Presbyterian clergy in Cape Town that prayer which is not extempore is not prayer at all. Many of the speaker's colleagues must have whistled softly to themselves. In the case of X.'s own father, both his family prayers and those in the pulpit were carefully thought out beforehand on a few broad lines, and came to be recognised by those who reflected as a sort of variable private liturgy. Some clergymen write their prayers and learn them by heart. Some write them and read them surreptitiously in the pulpit. Dear old Mr. Esselin of Worcester loved and admired the collects of the Roman Missal. Lutheran as he was, he knew many of them by

heart, because they are so full of matter and so perfectly expressed. He used to fire them off for his congregation, who, of course, never dreamt where those beautiful prayers came from.

It has already been recorded that from childhood X. shrank from personal impromptu prayer. In his early days he heard so many such prayers proceeding along questionable lines that he seldom could really join in them. He so often did not know what the man would say next; so often the man himself did not know. Many people mistake religious emotion for true spiritual fervour, forgetting that religion is a passion, and a passion does not become a virtue until it is rightly inspired and directed. Many a prayer is mere rhetoric, or simply an address to the congregation veiled under such forms as "Thou knowest, O Lord." One such was naïvely described in an American newspaper as "the most eloquent prayer ever addressed to the people of Boston."

Then there were many affectations and conventionalities which used to jar on X.'s mind even from childhood. One such case he specially remembers. Once at the Paarl the Rev. Ds. Van der Lingen of the Dutch Church was seriously ill, and at a meeting in Zion Kerk one of the elders, called upon to offer prayer, wished to pray for him. In these prayers you must not mention names: so this elder cast around for some such becoming periphrasis as "the highly esteemed pastor of a neighbouring congregation." He made several shots, but could not evolve one to his mind; at last he burst out: "O Lord, I mean Meneer Van der Lingen." It was still worse when affectation, forced excitement, vanity or vainglory obviously inspired such effusions. No wonder then that little X. early felt a preference for the Anglican formulas. Later on he learned a freer and better way than both, as we shall see in due course.

VI

Holidays at Norwich

A new home.

Some of the boys at the school were very small. Parents in some parts of the world, especially India, had to part from their little ones on account of the climate being unfavourable to the growth of European children. One tiny dot of about five still spoke with the infantile *l* for *r*. And there was a big boy whose ear and vocal organs could never discriminate between *r* and *w*. This big boy was overheard once admonishing the little one. "Look here, you mustn't say 'lipe chelly': you must say 'wipe chewwy.'" Well, for these small boys there was a lady teacher. Fortunately for them, she had a tender heart, refined ways, and intellectual culture far beyond her position—if anything can be beyond the education of infants. She spoke beautiful English, with a musical voice, and with a pleasant faint suspicion of Norfolk accent. This teacher was Miss Clark. Why should her name be hidden here? She afterwards had a school of her own, run on original lines, and two of her pupils, handing on her traditions, have in recent years done signal service to education in South Africa—Miss Freeman and Miss Springall. Miss Clark had a brother at home in Norwich twelve years old, and she had the kindly thought to take home with her for the holidays one boy from the school of the same age to be his playmate. Her choice fell on X. Meeting him in the passage one day, she said: "Would you like to come home with me for the holidays?"

Would he like it! It was a promise of paradise. He felt like the small boy in *Punch* who was gazing hungrily into a pastry-cook's window, when a kindly old lady said to him, "My little boy, could you eat a tart?" "Could I eat a tart! Could I eat forty blooming tarts!" X.'s answer was to fling his arms round her neck and give her a hug which did its very utmost to convince her that he was just the right boy to choose. What made her choose him he never knew; he never asked; but he often used vaguely to wonder what he had done to deserve such bliss.

The family in it.

These holidays opened to him a wide and varied new world, and had an enormous influence on his development. Moreover, they enriched his life with a permanent set of friendships, the last link of which is not broken yet. The character of the influence will be best seen from a description of the home and family—father, mother, five daughters, and the boy. Mr. Clark was a thorough business man, characterised by all the best qualities of the English race. He was head clerk of the Norwich Insurance Company, which owes much of its widespread success to the original impulse of his wise management. Not highly educated in his youth, he educated himself along with his children as they grew up, and had got together a library which to X. represented more than the wealth of Ormuz or of Ind. He was as kind to X. as a man can possibly be. Indeed, from the first day the little stranger entered into a full share of the love of the household. Mrs. Clark was a darling. In intellectual pursuits her daughters had gone beyond her, but nothing could go beyond that motherliness which seemed to be the very essence of her. There was no need for discipline in that house: it was all love. Not for the whole world would X. have gone counter to the slightest

wish of these two. Perhaps that is why the invitation was repeated the next year.

The religion of it. The religion of the home was Wesleyanism, again a new form: but the newness appeared only in the church. For all that he could feel in the family life, the form was that of his own father, who had passed from Lutheranism to Congregationalism without any personal change whatever. This form lays no stress on distinctive doctrine or official organisation, but consists simply of intimate love of our divine Lord, obedience to what is known of his written word, and application of the Gospel law of charity to oneself and others. It is, if it may be put so, Catholicism *minus* Sacraments and Mysteries. A Catholic priest would see things that ought to be added, but nothing that he would wish away. Thus another great lesson was learned.

Talks. The girls of the family, ranging from, say, twenty-five downwards, were, three of them at least, of the intellectual variety. Without breaking away from the faith of their parents, they were gradually, and perhaps unconsciously, adopting the modernistic attitude. They discussed the largest spiritual questions, and X. used to sit by and listen. The problems were, of course, beyond him, but he was learning to try his unfledged wings for flight. It set him on the questioning path, and was the second of the four kinds of life he lived in Norwich.

Books. The third was the library. He browsed around, picking here and there scraps of fascination. There were novels, but he read none of them, except perhaps, as he faintly remembers, one of Scott's. He settled firmly and decisively on Shakespeare, of whose dramas there was a noble library edition. Lying prone on the hearth-rug, with his nose nearly rubbing the volume on the floor,

kicking his heels with ecstasy in the air, he read Shakespeare through from end to end. Much was archaic to him, much was too deep for him, the grossness washed off him like water off a duck's back; but the procession of heroes and heroines, the music of the blank verse, the melody of the lyrics, the fairy-land of the native woodnotes wild, the humour of the clowns, the rogueries of the naughty fat old Falstaff, the living picture of history (so different from the mechanical textbook with its dates and facts), the romance and the tragedy, all this was a new intellectual life for him, and from this time forward there were no more bad marks in school when he returned.

Boys will be boys.

His fourth life was with his chum, for whose sake he had been invited. This boy was not intellectually disposed like his sisters. He was just a good, healthy, human boy of the British variety, not rebellious against love, but independent against all the outside world, with all the Bohemian tendencies of his kind. With him X. was in the fullest sympathy. Religion in the early morning, Shakespeare at midday, ideal discussions in the afternoon, and larks in the evening suited him exactly. The boys used to sally forth at twilight, X. wearing an old mortar-board of the King Edward VI. Grammar School to avoid singularity, meet other boys of that school with whom they had formed a gang of freebooters, and proceeded to torment the neighbourhood. No injury was done, no woman was frightened, it was the home-principle that they were not to forget they were gentlemen. But they were armed with pea-shooters and out for adventure. Extern boys and such like creatures were "fair game," and if it led to a fight it was all in the day's fun. The rattle of peas on a lighted window may have been an annoyance to those inside, but it was music to

the young bandits. They adopted the names of the Roman gods by way of camouflage. X. was Pluto, and so on. This led to impromptu versification. "Shoot, O Pluto," started it. When one of the boys missed, it led to the Father of the gods exclaiming, "O Cupid, you stupid"; to which the natural retort was: "Well, Jupiter, you're a good deal stupider." Most people used to ignore the pea-shooting, with at most a "Drat those boys!" but there was huge delight in inducing a choleric old gentleman to hobble to his front gate and bawl his imprecations in the dusk to the universe at large. It was very wrong, but no real harm was done, and boys will be boys, and one has little sympathy for those boys who can't be boys. Anyhow, X. enjoyed it thoroughly, and has ever retained a streak of Bohemianism beneath his sober exterior.

VII

More of Norwich

A wild pet. It may not be much of a step nearer to the Kingdom of Heaven to become more tender-hearted towards the animal world, but such a step was one result to X. of the Norwich visit. Like most boys he had an instinct for destruction, and trying to kill birds with a catapult (he always missed) appealed to him. But the catapult went out of favour owing to a more direct appeal from the bird-world itself. In one of their early rambles, the two young friends wandered into a disused sand-quarry. The vertical sides of this quarry were pigeon-holed by the nests of sand-martins, all well beyond the reach of predatory boys. While scrutinising the possibility of a raid for eggs, they found on the ground a poor little unfledged chick. It was lively enough in spite of its high fall. What was to be done? It was impossible to put it back in its nest, even if one could have known which its nest was. It was unthinkable either to kill it, or to leave it to starve. So X. carried it home in the warmth of the hollow of his hands, and undertook to be its foster-mother. A soft nest of cotton-wool was easily made: the difficulty was the food. X. drew the line at chewing up insects and offering the bolus to his baby; he resolved to try bread and milk. To his delight it answered perfectly. He used to put a bit of soft bread soaked in milk between his lips, and from the palm of his hand his tiny pet fed ravenously and throve wonderfully. Never was mother more proud of her baby's teeth than X. was of the rapidly

growing feathers of his charge. He taught it to fly by very gradual stages, until in a few weeks' time it could fly round the garden and catch insects for itself. Of course it was never caged. After a long flight it always perched on his shoulder, and then used to snuggle up and nudge him on the cheek to make him turn his lips round in case there might be some bread and milk there; if not, the kiss was given all the same. It is impossible to describe the delicious joy of receiving such marks of spontaneous love and confidence from a little wild thing. But it had to come to an end. One day, when birdie had gone to the top of the roof, a flight of his own tribe of swallows passed near overhead. The call of the blood prevailed, and X. saw him no more. But he was glad, for the holidays were nearly over, and what could he do with such a pet at school? Perhaps he has exaggerated the importance of this incident, but he cannot help thinking that, of the many Norwich influences which sent him back to school a more civilised and gentler-hearted boy, this little swallow-love was not the least.

Local preachers.

One aspect of religion at Norwich was by no means helpful to X. It was the Wesleyan institution of local preachers. He is not criticising, but only trying to record his feelings and experiences at the time. The local preacher, then and there at any rate, was often quite untrained. Now in the "Nonconformist" mode of worship the personality of the man in the pulpit is enormously emphasised. The reading is his, the preaching is his, and the prayers are his. The temptation is always there to make the personality a sort of magnet to draw good congregations. The untrained man is in the position of a neophyte or novice, and such a man, according to St Paul, is specially liable to the temptation. At any rate, the result is likely to jar on the mind even of a child

who wants to worship God and not to admire a man. A particularly glaring case was that of a man whom the Wesleyans themselves called "the Penny Preacher." He seemed to be obsessed with personal vanity, and made the most of the limelight. He was as eager to raise a laugh as any comic actor on the stage. His sermons bristled with eccentricities, all about himself. His prayers were weird beyond belief. He could not even let Scripture speak for itself. The reading one day was from the Acts—and it must be remembered that he himself chose the passages—and the story was of the trial of St Paul at Caesarea. When it came to the exclamation of Festus, "Paul, thou art beside thyself: much learning doth make thee mad," the Penny Preacher looked round with a sly and triumphant smile, saying, "Ah! my friends, Festus could never have said that of *me*: I never went to school." This may have been an extreme case, but it completed X.'s preference for a liturgy, for prayers which should be, not the froth of a vain man's vagaries, not the sentimentality of a forced emotionalism, not the ineptitude of an untrained mind not knowing what to pray for, but the hived honey of the devotion of the past, with no impertinent personality to stand between the soul and God.

Summary of Norwich influence.

The influence of Norwich, then, may be summed up thus—a renewal of the fragrance of home-life; more taste for the essential and unemotional religion of calm faith and love, but less for the Protestant form of ritual; the dawn of enquiry into the deeper spiritual problems of life; an appreciation of literature above all the allurements of fiction; and a general softening of boyish inconsiderate roughness.

Two other influences should still be added—Art and Nature. Of course the boys at the school were from time to time taken to Westminster Abbey or

the Tower for "educational" visits, which were heartily detested. The facts of history were the important thing, not the romance or art. But the Cathedral of Norwich and its historic Keep (perhaps the simplest and most symmetrical and most effective of all the old secular buildings), viewed frequently along with friends who thought and spoke of the beautiful, was quite a different thing. And as for Nature, what could one get even then in a London suburb? X. remembers counting along with one of his sister-friends no fewer than twenty-seven tints in the early autumn leaves of a Norfolk grove. What has this to do with Mount Sion? He does not know; but he has a feeling that in the ultimate analysis Truth, Goodness, and Beauty are one, and an unselfish devotion to any one of them draws the soul nearer to the other two.

A revival. His last year at school was marked by a new religious experience which also was not very helpful. Some zealous and well-meaning persons got up a "revival" among the boys. A revival is a very different thing from what Catholics know as a "mission," and in the most important respects it is the very opposite of a "retreat." It is not an earnest meditation on the last truths, nor a practical instruction on prayer, nor a training in useful modes of renewing spiritual activity. It is purely an appeal to emotional excitement, and of course such excitement can easily be made contagious. This time the feeling of the boys was worked up to an unnatural pitch. X. was not out of sympathy with the genuine religious aim, but in spite of his connection with the voluntary prayer-meeting he could not bring himself up to the standard of enthusiasm. The leaders were somewhat disappointed in him. As a matter of fact, the movement failed by its own turbulence. The boys could not keep it up. And then the

inevitable sarcasm brought about a reaction. One of the efforts was to call upon the boys to hand up all surreptitious novels. If there had been any immoral books, of course they should be destroyed; but fancy handing up *Tom Brown's Schooldays* for a bonfire! One boy—a South African boy by the way—came up to the penitents' row with a book. He was by no means a bad boy, but being somewhat phlegmatic as well as witty, he was looked upon as a "hard case," so he was hailed with great satisfaction as a "brand from the burning." He said: "I have come to give up a book of fiction. I am very sorry to have read so much of it: if I can possibly help it, I will never read a line of it again." The book he handed up was his Virgil! Another boy was naughtier still: they said he was blasphemous, but if you put a boy a silly question, you must not be surprised at getting a silly answer back. One of the promoters said to him, "And have you found the Lord?" He replied, "Found him! Good heavens, I didn't know he was lost." X. does not defend these young rebel satirists, but they certainly pricked the bubble of the revival, and the excitement evaporated. You cannot combine laughter with misdirected worry over your own soul. The promoters were well-meaning, but they did not understand boys. No benefit remained from the movement, while the back-wash of it caused an unhealthy reaction. Certainly it did X. no good.

Crime and restitution.

X. was one of those who had no forbidden books to give up—not from want of love for books, but simply from want of cash. His pocket-money was 2d. a week, and 4d. a month had to go to cricket and football: and he was a hungry boy. You can't revel in fruit and sweets and at the same time stock a library on 1d. a week. The combination of poverty and hunger led him once into disaster. It must be said for him

that the matron—that same awful woman who got him so cruelly punished on Christmas Day—was a rigid economist, and she made all her highly successful financial triumphs out of the boys' food. So X. and the others were perennially more hungry than boys ought to be allowed to be. Once at the end of dinner he asked in all simplicity for some more dry bread—he knew there was nothing else. He was treated like Oliver Twist and punished for insolence. Well, there was an Irishman named Mike who used to come round on the heath with a barrow selling fruit. One dreadful day X. was penniless and frightfully hungry: he had been fined for something or other and his last penny was a remote memory. A fateful opportunity occurred: nobody was looking, and X. stole a pear from Mike's barrow. He suffered keenly in conscience: and even when his next penny came, he did not dare to own up, having vague fears of Mike's righteous indignation handing him over to the police. Years afterwards, on his return to England, he revisited the old school—he loves that school, and still, after fifty-five years, pays his subscription to the Old Boys' Union—and then went on to the heath to find Mike if possible. There he was, but he had come down in the world: a wretched basket had taken the place of the prosperous barrow. So X. went to the old fruiterer and said: "Mike, you won't remember me, but six years ago I was at one of these schools and stole a pear from you, and here's a shilling to pay for it." Mike then revealed his religion and his nationality: "The blessing of God on you, sir, and you were welcome to the little pear, and (with a vivid realisation of proportional restitution) sure I wish you had stolen the whole barrow." Mike was the second Catholic X. had ever spoken to: the first had been the soldier who horrified him by telling him to play on Sunday.

VIII

The Voyage Home

End of school.

In 1868 X., though only fourteen, had to leave school. The age-limit of the school was sixteen, so his brother had to return, and his parents wanted both to come home together. Besides, as X. was now head of the school and had gone through all the examinations then possible—College of Preceptors, Oxford and Cambridge Locals, some six or seven of them—there seemed to be no special reason for him to stop longer.

The ship chosen for them was happily a sailing vessel, a beautiful thing, one of Green's Indian Line, originally built for a man-of-war. Her name was the *Renown*. She was the joy of all the sailors. She had once sailed from the Cape to England in forty-three days at the very same time that the stodgy old *Briton* did it under steam in forty-two. This time the whole voyage took seventy days, for, owing to a storm in the Channel, she had to put back into Falmouth, and it was three weeks before she could finally leave England. Then another storm drove her towards South America, so far out of her course that a butterfly came on board from St Paul's Island, and she took forty-nine days from Falmouth to Cape Town.

Trying to learn.

The voyage to the Cape has been described hundreds of times, but it came at a critical period for X.'s mental development and cannot be passed over. He was always, as we have seen, observant and intro-

spective; but he had now reached the stage of criticism and conscious measurement of effects produced upon him by a new environment.

There was, first of all, an intellectual novelty. He was passionately fond of mathematics, but hitherto it had all been pure theory; there was now a chance of knowing something of its practical application. He stood by with bated breath at the daily determination of latitude and longitude and longed to ask questions. He tried the first officer and found to his astonishment that some sort of navigation could be done merely mechanically. This officer knew less of trigonometry than his youthful enquirer; he was proud of his ignorance, and laughed at those who wasted time over theory. The sailors, however, said—and they always know—that the best seaman on board was the third officer. So to the third officer X. went, only to be repelled time after time as merely an inquisitive boy. One day X. said to him: "What is the height of that mast?" "Oh, get away with you and your questions," was the reply he got. Whereupon, stung with the contempt, he drew himself up and said he would go and find out for himself. Fetching out his poor school box of instruments, he took sights with his compasses, measured angles with his protractor and base lines with his foot rule, and taking an average of a number of these rough observations, proudly marched up to the officer and announced the height of the mast as 173 feet. He must have been very lucky in his calculations, for the officer turned sharp round on him and said, "Who told you?" It was his *open sesame*, for thenceforward that officer was his friend: he not only gave the keenly desired explanations, but spoke to his young pupil freely, and with that delicate courtesy in which sailors are so rich, spoke as if to a grown-up person.

A storm. Thus it was that when the great storm came and the third officer was in charge, X. had the privilege of standing in perfect confidence by his side. Of course he knew better than to talk at such a time: it was joy enough to see and feel the noble vessel, as if in living obedience to a man's voice, plough its way into and over the mountainous waves. X. ought to have been afraid, but the scene was so sublimely beautiful that he forgot fear. Besides, he was determined to show himself worthy of the friendship.

One gigantic wave caught the ship from behind. The captain's gig was swung athwart the stern, and this wave cracked it like a nut, leaving only a fragment or two to show it had been there. The *Renown* shuddered and sprang forward like a spirited horse stung by a spur. But a worse thing followed. The corner of one of the sails, which were all close-furled, of course, got loose and began to flap. Every time it flapped, some more fastenings came away, until with every blow the whole ship shivered and the strength of the mast was tried to the utmost. The moment the trouble began, the officer, realising what was going to happen, with a mighty shout ordered all hands up to refurl the sail. It was a noble sight to see those men close together on the yard-arm fighting the terror inch by inch in deadly peril. Meanwhile the passengers were in a state of panic and gathered in the saloon for a prayer-meeting. It was certainly a time for prayer, but surely not for singing sentimental hymns. A public exhibition of fear annoys the men who are meeting the danger. "You do assist the storm," they say with Shakespeare's Bo'sun. At any rate, when the sound of the hymns was wafted on to the deck, the officer bent down to X. and said: "I don't mind betting you that there is more swearing up aloft than praying down

below." Soon after, the captain came along and X.'s privilege was over. "Down with you," he said, "this is no place for boys." That particular boy felt he had had his baptism of storm. He had seen Nature in her wildest mood, he had stood through a grand display of perfect seamanship, he had witnessed heroism calmly taken as part of the duty of the night, and he went fearless to bed, feeling that such a ship so officered and so manned could not fail to ride through to safety. Two days afterwards the captain, who was part owner of the ship, gave a champagne supper to all the passengers, and gravely told them that they had been in very serious peril indeed.

IX

Voyage Continued

A little world of flirtation.

The passengers of the *Renown* need not detain us long, except the clerical contingent, which must be considered separately. For the first and only period of his life, feminine influence had no inspiration for X. Doubtless there were good women among the passengers, but they naturally did not take much notice of the shy little stranger boy. One of them was a novelty to him, a little Frenchwoman married to a British officer; she was as gay as a columbine and as immune to flirtation as the mizzen mast. The type seems to be Celtic. There were two girls of about X.'s age—silly things, vain and pretentious. The few women he remembers at all were of the frivolous sort, flirty and mischief-loving. The result was more lively than edifying. X. of course was "out of it," and they never seemed to realise that he was one of those spectators who see most of the game. Their conversation in his presence was distinctly *décolleté* (it does not deserve a good English word), and, though of course not immoral, was quite below the level of that of the sailors before the mast. They used to lure men on to self-revelation, and then betray them to the rest of the ship. X.'s brother, being sixteen and well grown, was just within the zone of danger; and one day X. coming on deck found, to his horror, that a stand-up fight was just about to begin between his brother and an officer. It was all about one of these sirens. The officer had every possible advantage—height, size, weight, age and physical training

—and X.'s heart went down into his boots. Fortunately, in the middle of the first round, the officer noticed that he had a massive ring on his hand; immediately he stepped back and said: "I beg your pardon, I struck you with a ring on my finger." Immediately the younger combatant held out his hand in acknowledgement, and the fight was over. You can shake hands before and after a fight, but it is fatally illogical in the middle. X. made a note of it—it is a fine thing to remember, even at the height of excitement, that you are a gentleman. The woman concerned must have been somewhat disappointed at the result of her mischief-making: the merest touch of the realities of life had thrust her aside as a nonentity.

Sailors. Things being so, X. turned for healthy breathing to the sailors. They, too, were a new species to him. He must be excused for speaking of human beings as if they were inmates of a Zoo. But he was seriously studying realities by means of personalities. And he was studying, not from above, but from within. If it was a Zoo, he did not claim to be more than a monkey. He had been abnormally brought up, and had to use all his wits to get into right touch with the normal. Up till then his classification of men had been into two classes—the good (*i.e.*, the unco' guid) and the reprobate worldlings. It took him a long time to learn the Gospel truth that the True Light enlighteneth *every* man coming into this world. Here, then, was a set of men who welcomed this inquisitive boy into their midst. We have seen what they could do in an hour of deadly peril. They professed no virtue. Doubtless they could, and did, "paint a town red" on occasion. But in their normal habitat they showed some noble qualities. They had the gentleman's sense of *Reverentia debetur pueris*. X., mixing freely with them for hours every

day, never heard from them a word which a child should not hear. Even swear-words, which to normal men really mean nothing at all, were suppressed because he was there. They called him Sea-Pie, because of his initial sea-sickness, and made him feel that his coming was no real restraint upon them. One of them, who always took lime-juice instead of grog, was questioned on this point by the unconscious impertinence of boyhood. He answered, "No, I don't profess to be religious, but if I take my grog at sea, I want to drink ashore; and if I drink, I drink the comforts of my wife and children." So X. sat among them and watched them carve their models of the *Renown* equipped with all a seaman's knowledge (he would have given worlds to possess one of them), and they answered his questions, and won his heart. They classified humanity afresh for him. At the end of the voyage, when X. and his brother finally left the ship in Table Bay, they gave him a moment of triumph which afterwards often raised a lump in his throat. As the boat left the ship, a noise was heard behind, and X., looking back, saw all the rigging manned by sailors who waved and chanted "Good-bye, Sea-Pie." All that for a mere boy! Splendid fellows! Good-bye for ever to Total Depravity!

An Anglican middy.

As a sort of link between sea and Church came one of the midshipmen with whom X. struck up a boy-friendship. Their first common ground was music: they were the only two people on board who could sing. R. was the son of a well-known Anglican Bishop of High Church proclivities, and "Ritualism," as it was then called, became the theme of many a long talk. The time for these talks was in the dark before the dawn. Whenever R. had the morning watch (midnight to 4 a.m.), it was arranged between

them that at midnight he should steal into the cabin and pull X.'s toes. They sat or walked on the poop-deck, helping themselves to vegetables from the ship's boats. With good teeth and digestion, raw carrots, turnips, and onions are by no means to be despised. And now and then, when he was in a good humour, the cook would add a glass of hot mulled wine. On such Spartan fare, punctuated by Sybarite luxury, the two boys discussed everything they knew about on earth or in heaven.

Confession. Quite the newest thing to X. was that R. was accustomed to go to confession. The idea was certainly adumbrated in Scripture, but had completely dropped out of Puritan practice and theory. It appealed to X. so strongly that he very nearly determined to put it to the proof. He has often wondered what would have happened if he had. It was not the sacramental side he thought of. The Puritans have no sacraments at all in the strict sense of the word. Even Baptism, when validly administered by them, receives that validity from the general intention of the Church, and is not intended *by them* to have a sacramental effect. Thus the very notion of sacrament had not yet entered X.'s mind. But confession as a means of guidance and encouragement seemed to him to be an experiment worth trying. And once more the disappointed feeling came over him: why were there things in holy Scripture which his own Puritanism utterly ignored ?

X

The Clerical Contingent

Comprehensiveness. As we have seen, the midshipman was a sort of link between sea and Church. His father having been a Bishop and he himself a choir-boy, X. looked upon him as an authoritative witness, and they had many a talk in the morning watch on the ecclesiastical phenomena that displayed themselves on the *Renown*. The ultra-Calvinism of Reading was not repeated here, but there was variety enough to give X. a practical view of Anglican "comprehensiveness." There is no intention of satire or controversy. Those forces must be described that were moulding X.'s outlook on to the religious world. He knew better even then than to judge a system by eccentric members of it; but he was beginning to have a shrewd idea as to what was typical, even under eccentricity, and in this his morning watch conversations were a great help.

Clerical types. Let us describe the persons concerned. (1) The most important, though the least familiar, was a clergyman of the "High and Dry" variety, a thorough gentleman, and one to whom enthusiasm of any kind was probably highly distasteful. He held himself very much aloof and quite ignored the squabbles going on around his feet. He had a taste for science. One of the sailors had from a hastily improvised platform at the bow harpooned a porpoise (a feat watched by X. with fascination), and this clergyman gave him 10s. for the head, which he wanted to dissect. X. did not dare to ask to be present

at the dissection. It was probably this same shyness that prevented his experiment in confession.

(2) The next was a clergyman in deacon's orders. His doctrinal views never transpired. He seemed to be everything to everybody, chiefly to himself. He was a pushful person, and insisted on saying the absolution and other things which a deacon has no right to say. They called him "the little buck-priest." It was he who conducted the services, the Vicar quietly standing aside to let him have his push. Here X. found a drawback to the fixed liturgical "common prayer." Reverently read, and with human eccentricities kept in the background, it is beautiful and devotional. But it can be spoiled.

(3) The third of the Anglican group (the middy being the fourth) was a Catechist, going on mission to India. He was a curious character. Fresh from the University, he had not yet found his poise in the world. He was a Scotsman, and had been a Presbyterian, but was now at the very tip-top of Ritualism. Anglicans will please excuse the word; not only was it the usual term then, but it exactly suited him. Externals were all his joy. Though not in any way ordained, he used to come to breakfast on Fridays with a cassock on. He sat on the extreme edge of his chair, ostentatiously partook of dry toast and black coffee, and walked out with the air of a martyr. On Sundays he wore his cassock all day. But he was not proof against the sirens. One of them played him a nasty trick, but his own vanity had laid him open to it. He had done rather well at college, Campbell's University, whichever that was, and had taken the double prize for Prose and Verse in the same year, being the first since Campbell's time to achieve that distinction. He told you that fact in your first conversation with him. This particular siren drew him out by posing

as a budding devotee. She lured him on and on until he was emboldened to offer to hear her confession. Then she told the whole ship, and life became a burden to him. He was not, however, altogether a "bounder," and was by no means a fool. He edited a bright little weekly paper for the voyage; and when, in an account of ship-croquet, he introduced a Mrs. Mantrap saying, "Come into this corner, captain, and take two off me," he certainly got "some of his own back." There was nearly a duel over it, but everybody admitted that he had received great provocation. He somewhat rehabilitated himself when it came to theatricals; as the Doctor in Sheridan's *Scheming Lieutenant* he proved himself easily the best actor on board.

(4) The last of the contingent was the Rev. Mr. J., a missionary of the London Society, and therefore of X.'s own communion. X. was rather ashamed of him. He was a man of naturally coarse fibre, not much improved by religion. He was just married, and this was his honeymoon trip; but when Mrs. J. was on one side of the ship, Mr. J. was usually on the other. His neglect of his bride made him very unpopular, and it was carried so far that on one occasion when an open port-hole had caused their cabin to be flooded, while poor little Mrs. J. was baling it out with a tin and a bucket, Mr. J. was comfortably partaking of tea and cake in the saloon. The reverend missionary never knew how near he had come to being "ragged" by some of the indignant young British officers. Everybody wondered what effect he was going to have on the Indian people with their Oriental courtesy and high ideals of unselfishness. Yet X. must have had some serious talks with him, now forgotten, for Mr. J. did him the good service of lending him a Greek testament, and thus

starting him on the habit of referring to the original to get clearer views of a text. He found this habit amusingly useful one day a few years afterwards. A Low Church clergyman was defending the somewhat Pharisaic method of aggressive religion, giving strangers tracts and asking if they were "saved," etc., and was urging X. to adopt that method. He enforced his contention by the text, "Consider one another to provoke unto love and good works." X. answered, "To provoke whom?" "Why, them, of course." "Not so," replied X., perhaps too impertinently for a mere youth, "the Greek word is subjective, and the text means, Study one another as a means of self-excitation to love and good works." The clergyman was rather taken aback, and seemed annoyed: but doubtless the new view of the text gave him something to think about. X. had not been intentionally impertinent; but sometimes, when he thought he saw a thing clearly, he used to forget he was young: just as now he sometimes forgets he is old. What is Time, anyhow?

"Union." Though the service was Anglican, Mr. J. was sometimes asked to preach, and he also came up to communion. It was a curious puzzle to X. that his midshipman friend had no objection to the preaching, but deeply resented Mr. J.'s being admitted to communion. The net result of it all for X. was agitation and bewilderment. The only thing that was clear to him was that, if he should elect to preach the Gospel, he should not know what form of Gospel to preach.

A boy's reverie. The end of the voyage stands out very clear in memory. The *Renown* reached Table Bay in the evening; the docks were not yet ready, and as it was after business hours passengers had to wait for the morning in order to land. The overwhelming beauty of the mountain,

the sense of home-coming, the problem of newly opening life, took away from X. all desire or even thought of sleep. All night long he paced the deck or leaned on the taffrail, gazing and thinking. Will it be blamed in a boy's boundless ambition if he thought even of becoming Prime Minister in his native land? It was Table Mountain's fault. The marvellous scene intoxicated the boy's judgement. Long afterwards, writing of it, he said (and thought of the *Renown* as he said it):

> But best I love thee in the clear, cold night,
> What time the starlight, gleaming, marks thee off,
> Twin child of night, starless thyself and still,
> Flat-topped, rough-edged, but otherwise a part
> Of the deep blackness of the vault of Heaven,
> A being not of earth.

XI

Home and College

Home influences diverge.

The next few years of X.'s development proceeded on somewhat mazy lines. He was already out of sympathy with a good deal of Puritanism, but he knew of nothing better. With varying intensity he threw himself into what he had, and never even thought of breaking away. He held to the Scriptures and to the Personality of our divine Lord, and vaguely trusted that the way would clear before him. The books at home were now freed from the index ban, and he read ravenously. Fortunately the percentage of fiction was very low. Still more fortunately, his father had no controversial books in his theological library. It was characteristic of him. Even in his conversation there was never anything *against* any person or system. The habit of sitting in judgement which forms so prominent a feature of the Pharisaic side of Puritanism was quite foreign to him, and in this X. resolved to follow him.

This implies that there was a divergence of influences in his home which he had not known of in his early days. His father placidly followed the plain path of grace and duty; his mother chose a more emotional (or, as she called it, spiritual) line. She herself put it one day in a nutshell, saying to X., "Your father is the most moral man I know, but he lacks spirituality." The remark, though she never knew it, was the death-blow to her own doctrinal influence, for X. preferred his father's "morality" to anybody else's "spirituality." The attitude which uses the word "moral" as almost

a term of reproach, and at the same time exalts human excitement as if it were purely spiritual, shows in all its nakedness the fundamental weakness of the Reformation. Luther's fatal error was his curious misreading of St Paul's distinction between faith and works. It was the more curious because St James had so directly and authoritatively interpreted that distinction. Luther, as we know, waved aside what he blasphemously called "the epistle of straw"; and to this day the Puritans are shy of it. Nevertheless X., taking Scripture as his firm basis, knew that St James was just as much inspired as St Paul. And even without St James it was already evident to him that St Paul's distinction between *mere* works of the law and *living* works of grace had been by Luther totally misunderstood.

The other mistake—that of identifying emotionality with spirituality—had already, as we have seen, troubled X. in the matter of extempore prayer. The mistake is due to the fact that Protestantism has never developed any philosophy of its own, and the psychology it usually adopts is the purely secular one which is eating like the white ant through all the timbers of its structure. This, however, is in advance of X.'s powers at the time, and will have to be discussed later on. The fogginess of this mistake obscured his path for a good many years.

Phrenology. Chronologically, an incident should be here recorded which may have had a subtle influence, though both then and now X. has always repudiated it. With his mother he went once to see a man who was an enthusiastic amateur phrenologist. This man asked to be allowed to examine the boy's bumps. After the examination he turned round and said excitedly to the mother, "This boy will be a second Martin Luther." Certainly there is a ridge of confluent bumps on X.'s

head which will make his skull look rather funny should he ever go bald, and phrenologists do say that Benevolence, Reverence and Conscientiousness are thereby indicated. But whether X. or anybody else possesses these qualities or not is much more easily inferred from a short acquaintance than from irregularities in the skull. Certainly, however, the "prophecy" pleased the mother very much.

A budding teacher.

At the age of fifteen X. began his career as a teacher. Not only did he at once take a class in the Sunday School, but he became officially head-teacher in his father's Mission School, for several months drawing a salary from the Education Department—the first money he ever earned. As, soon after that, he went to College, it might be thought that this term of employment was only a flash in the pan. But he had to support himself at College, because the family was large and the home income small. Therefore, besides taking private pupils, he taught Latin at the South African College School and arithmetic at a Girls' High School. It was at the latter that he suddenly and instinctively realised his vocation as a teacher. At the first lesson, text-book in hand, he put his pupils through their paces. The girls were of his own age, and the principal, who was present for "propriety," was a rather pompous person. She guaranteed the class "up to the Rule of Three," and X. was to carry them further. The tests, however, revealed "no foundation." The boy then, feeling that it was a crisis, took a daring step. Sitting down, he said, "The fact is, girls, that you know no arithmetic at all: I shall have to teach you to count. Close your books and follow me on the board." The principal got very red, and for the next two or three lessons the French mistress acted as "propriety." After that, they realised that this was not a boy, but a teacher

who put his work first and would have no nonsense. Never since that day has X. taught from a text-book. The dire need of that class taught him how to teach, and he has always learned more from his own lessons than his pupils have. Fortunately, the experiment justified itself, and the success of the class completely reconciled the dignified principal to the boy's initial impertinence.

XII

Preparing for Life

Character study.

Quite the most urgent requisite for a teacher is the study of character. As we have seen, X. had been more or less unconsciously studying both characters and systems from an early age, but now that it had been suddenly revealed to him by his work that teaching would probably form a large part of his vocation, he began with deliberate intention to observe character and to note down his observations. With the imprudence of youth he showed some of these character sketches to his models, and for a while all went well. But he did it once too often. One lady, whom he had met only amid the ordinary amenities of society, and who consequently had been to him nothing but sweetness and gentleness, nevertheless seemed to him to show subtle signs of hot temper. When she asked him to draw up her character, he was boy enough to say this. The result was startling. She flew into such a passion that he had to beat a retreat, chuckling over the verification of his diagnosis, but vowing to keep his studies thereafter to himself.

These trivialities are not without their bearing on the main theme. When the great question of his life had to be faced, X. came to his decision with a speed which some people called rashness. But quick judgement is not rash if it has been preceded by practice so deliberate and continuous that it tends to become intuitive.

Presentiment. In one respect these judgements of his became uncannily abrupt, the grounds of them and the process being utterly unknown to him. On several occasions he has at first sight experienced an overwhelming impulse towards an adverse moral verdict. It has not been antipathy, for he has sometimes liked the persons concerned. This has enabled him better to understand what Socrates meant by his *daimon*. Needless to say, he has never acted on such impressions until they have been ratified by experience. But he has never known any of them to be falsified.

Caution. He has always, moreover, been conscious of an opposite possible source of error. Owing (as phrenologists would say) to his bump of reverence, he has habitually had a tendency to over-idealise. He has scrutinised this danger very closely and is resolved that idealising is a surer guide to truth than criticising. The romance of Ferdinand and Miranda holds more promise of permanence than that of Benedick and Beatrice. All that is needed is to apply as a corrective a control of common sense which shall enable one to glide from the ideal to the real without a crash. Is not this the way to pass from the "visionary gleam" of childhood to the later "watch o'er man's mortality"? Is not this the secret of every happy marriage? Is it not perhaps God's appointed way of arriving at truth? Initial criticism (which is the same thing as prejudice) necessarily shuts out some truth; initial reverence, even if it does let in some error, still keeps the door open for the whole truth. Besides, if you err in idealising, the only sufferer (if any) is yourself: if you err in criticising, you injure both. Thus X. was prepared to meet anything new with optimism, and, should it be strange, he thought with Hamlet, "therefore as a stranger give it welcome."

Church membership. Taking up the thread again chronologically, soon after his home return X. "joined" his father's Church, the Congregational or Independent. This ceremony entitled him to go to communion, and from that time on he communicated with fair regularity either in that Church or in the Anglican. It did not, however, strangely enough, entitle him to be called in their mode of speech "a Christian." That, with them, follows on the emotional state called "conversion," as we shall subsequently see.

A Protestant novice-mistress. During his time at college, for about five years (all but a few months) he resided at his grandmother's house, where he underwent a Spartan discipline and had some curious experiences. As already observed, she had a theory that young people needed to be steadily snubbed for their soul's good. No novice-mistress in the world was ever more ingenious than she in devising occasions for this practice. As an example, if she came into the room and he happened to be reading the paper, she would just snatch the paper from his hands as if he were a mere newspaper rack, and sit down to read it herself. Not that she wanted to read it, but simply she saw a fair chance and took it. These manifold humiliations were sometimes very galling. One would not have minded so much if there had been a chance of "answering back"; but a gentleman can't retaliate on his grandmother. One rule which hampered him very much as a student was "night prayers at nine o'clock, and no study after that." Sometimes after going to bed he would risk getting up again to do some work, but he was nearly always caught. The old lady, when she felt sleepless, had the habit of prowling round the house, and when she saw his light a violent knocking would drive him back to bed. Considering the amount of

teaching he had to do, and considering how often he would fly from the house because he could not stand the snubs, he did not have a quarter of the study time he should have had. He did much more thinking than reading during those five years.

A temporary home of grace.

For the few months, already noted as an exception to this life, X. had the privilege of living in the household of the Rev. Dr. Andrew Murray. It was Dr. Murray's custom to take into his home and treat as a son some lad who was expected to go in for the Church. As X. had not yet given up the hope of doing this, he was one of the chosen. It did not give him any new kind of religious experience, but it was a delightful home of peace and greatly strengthened his hold on grace. Dr. Murray had a rare power of sustained emotion based on energetic thought. His character was much like what Father Faber's must have been. His solid holiness and gracious courtesy, and Mrs. Murray's sweet motherliness, impressed the boy's growing character very deeply, and filled his heart with a reverence and gratitude he has never allowed to flag.

Perhaps it may be further noted that, as he had already done at school, X. joined an association among the students for reading the Scripture and for prayer. This he did again afterwards in England when at University College, London. He did not think it right to neglect any means whereby more truth could come to him.

XIII

"Conversion"

The Puritan conscience. It need not be said that at his grandmother's house X. found the Nonconformist conscience very highly developed, not only with its stern sense of duty, but also with all its irrationalities and superstitions. To the former he entirely subscribed, even if he did not always reach the high level; to the latter he accommodated himself for peace' sake without revealing how much they appealed to his sense of humour. Thus, it was wicked to touch the piano on Sunday, but you might play the harmonium as much as you liked, because it is a sacred instrument. It was wicked in theatricals (which indeed were wicked anyhow) to imitate thunder, because it is the voice of God. Living at Mowbray, through which the classic Liesbeek flows—not yet in those days a receptacle for dead cats and dogs—it was X.'s custom to have his swim every morning above the weir. The first week, a frightful scolding revealed to him that it was wicked to bathe on the Sabbath.

An early Catholic principle. It must not be thought that these irrationalities put him out of temper with religion. He kept the Pharisaic view of the Sabbath until he found a better one. Not till he was twenty-one or twenty-two did he ever open a secular book on Sunday: and then it was because at that time he emancipated himself from narrow and irrational obligations for which he could find no warrant in Holy Writ. Incidentally, however, this particular strictness served him well in another way. Most of his examinations began

on a Monday: so he finished his preparation on the Saturday, and came to the test with a mind freshened by the day of rest. So many candidates, by working right up to the limit, come to the examination with their nerves overwrought and their mental powers jaded, that he has always advised his pupils to take the previous day off, Sunday or no Sunday.

One day during the holidays his mother came to wake him in the morning and found him already studying in bed. She afterwards spoke to him seriously and asked him to promise her that he would always begin the day with God by making his first reading from holy Scripture. He gave her the promise, and from that day to this—exceptions allowed for such necessary interruptions as are incident to human habits—he has substantially kept his word. Perhaps it was keeping this promise that in a critical time saved him from shipwreck. And he owes it to the wisdom of his mother.

Bible-readings.

At his grandmother's house it was the custom for a number of friends to meet informally in order to read and discuss the Bible. X. enjoyed these meetings, and his little Greek Testament often proved of value. These gatherings eventually resulted in a number of his relatives joining the "Plymouth Brethren." They call themselves "*The* Brethren," with emphasis on the *the*. This development never appealed to X. in any way. For satisfied self-righteousness and supercilious exclusiveness they stand supreme among the smaller sects of Christendom. But at first there was no sectarian intention. One of the visitors was Mr. L., an Anglican clergyman of the evangelical school. He was a dear, good man, but his sermons (written, of course) were deplorably dull, and away from his manuscript he floundered helplessly. His churchwarden always accompanied him. Every now and then, on some text of Scrip-

ture, Mr. L. would roll himself nervously in his chair and deliver himself. As soon as he had done, the churchwarden invariably took up the theme with the words, " What Mr. L. *means* to say is this." It became a sort of liturgy, and X. used to wait for the inevitable phrase with intense delight. On rare occasions, when in Cape Town, X.'s father used to sit in their midst with silent interest. He knew more of Scripture than all the rest of them put together, but they seemed unanimous in regarding him as a " moral," not " spiritual," man. They never referred anything to him, and expected no opinion from him. X. knew they would get a shock some day from a humorous twinkle in his father's eyes over some blunder or other, a twinkle which he had learned to interpret. One day they got on to a trivial point—namely, whether the word " soap " is mentioned in the Bible. They came to the conclusion that it is not. Nobody asked the quiet man in the corner. When they had quite agreed upon it, the quiet man without any reference book simply remarked: " Jeremiah, chapter ii, verse 22." The effect was electrical.

" Worldliness."

All this time, in spite of his interest in religion, in spite of steady communion, in spite of belonging to a prayer-meeting, in spite of teaching in Sunday school, X. was not in their terminology " a Christian." All these things were " moral." He had not the " spiritual " hall-mark. He was not " converted." He was engaged in social frivolities. He had acted in charades. He played at forfeit games. They did that sort of thing in the Victorian era. Some of these games (*horribile dictu !*) were kissing games. There was one popular forfeit, " Kneel to the prettiest, bow to the wittiest, kiss the one you love best." X. had been known to pay that forfeit. Dreadful ! He was a " worldly " youth.

"Conversion." Not for a moment would he speak lightly of the experience called "conversion." It was an epoch in his life, and if his philosophical view of it now has altered, it still remains one of the high lights in his story and a reason for permanent gratitude to the grace of God. It was a state spiritual as well as emotional, and if the emotional was at the time somewhat unbalanced, the spiritual was (he hopes) permanent.

He had been reading a book by one Foster, called *Decision of Character*, much better known then than now. Let him be excused from relating those intimate feelings which urged him to annihilate self and stand inwardly and outwardly with his own nothingness on the all-sufficiency of the Redeemer. Whatever his faults have been, whatever turmoil of doubt he may have gone through, he has never gone back on the decision of that day. One of his aunts, Catherine Elliott, not unknown in connection with Dr. Andrew Murray's work at Wellington, was a woman of gentle and fervent piety; and, being more in sympathy with her than with anyone else in the house, he handed her that evening a small slip of paper on which was written, "I have accepted the truth as it is in Jesus." It was shortly before evening prayer, which she usually conducted. That night the dear creature broke down helplessly over the devotions. Many years after, X. found that little slip of paper amongst his mother's treasures after her death.

XIV

A Period of Uncertainty

Something amiss. The process of "conversion," as we have seen, connoted not only acceptance of what they call *the* Gospel truth of salvation by faith alone (faith here meaning not credence but confidence), and therefore assurance of one's being permanently in grace, but also an emotional state of super-exaltation of feeling in harmony with this assurance. One was expected to give zealous "testimony" against the "world," and to adopt aggressive tactics in order to convert others. X. honestly tried his best: he gave tracts, and spoke seriously about their souls to some people who were probably better Christians than himself. He remembers refusing to go to the college dinner because he had "become a Christian" and must renounce the world. In fact, he tried hard to become a Pharisee and a prig. It went very much against the grain, and very soon he began probing the conception of "worldliness," suspecting that something was radically amiss: it did not "work."

How about fasting? This set him on the way of taking Scripture as it stands, without the Puritan gloss. As one example, he saw that, beyond any possibility of explaining it away, Christ himself approved of fasting as an adjunct to prayer, and his Apostles practised it. He started on the experiment, hoping in his inexperience to preserve secrecy. But a healthy boy with a pronounced appetite cannot refuse his favourite foods without his mother's noticing it (this was in the holidays). The result was that he was scolded as severely as

if he had been detected in trying to steal. Once again there came to him the feeling that the religion of his upbringing had cut itself off from reality: it was out of touch with history, it was on this point directly contradictory of Scripture, and it was constantly using the words of the Bible in strained or eviscerated senses.

"Papists at once."

At Mowbray, where he mostly lived, there were only two churches, Low Anglican and Wesleyan. He chose to attend the former. There was a "High" church at Rondebosch (not nearly as high then as it is now); but when he thought of going there occasionally, he was sternly forbidden; his grandmother said he might "just as well go to the Papists at once." But although he went to the Anglicans and communicated there, he refused to leave the Congregational body. He felt there was nothing else definite to join, and his early wish to be a preacher of God's word now reluctantly died away.

Sitting in judgement on the "Churches."

At that period he remembers drawing up a solemn document (no longer extant), written with all the care and importance of a diplomatic dispatch, in which he came to the conclusion that, of all the religious bodies known to him, not one was in complete accord with holy Scripture, but that the one which came nearest was the Anglican Evangelical. The document ended with the statement that there was not much to choose between any of them, and that therefore all he could do was to wait for further enlightenment.

"Criticism" premature.

The modernist now might ask why he did not turn to criticism of the Scripture itself: perhaps it was not consistent with itself, and therefore nothing could be wholly consistent with it. Fortunately such an attitude did not even occur to him. The personality of our

divine Lord and his written Word were bed-rock to him, no more to be questioned than Table Mountain itself. He knew, of course, that rationalism was eating holes in formerly unquestioned beliefs, but it did not seem to him an enlightened proceeding to throw away such truth as you have because you find that it is not the whole truth.

He thought then, as he thinks now, that a man who has once come fully face to face with the personality of Christ is both intellectually and morally justified in thenceforward meeting all doubt with the answer, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

Moreover, he was still at the lower studies and quite unequipped for research. We don't expect a baby to refuse to take his elixir food unless it is first proved to him by chemical analysis that there is nothing deleterious in it. He may object if it is not quite sweet enough or warm enough, but he takes it. In after life he may undertake the analysis if he cares. X. was finding food for his soul, and experience is a good substitute for analysis.

Another stage completed.

This, then, was the stage at which he had arrived towards the end of his college days in Cape Town. He took his degree in 1874, at the age of twenty, and gained scholarships which enabled him to continue his studies in Europe. The moment he had taken his degree, he was offered the headmastership of the Boys' Public School at Wellington. The prospect was very alluring: to work with and under Dr. Andrew Murray, and alongside of the Huguenot institutions he had recently founded, and that with a salary which looked huge to the boy, with security of position and early pension—all this made a strong appeal to him. A further strong item in the account was that he should be able to do something for his parents at once. This, however, he was able to

counterbalance by allotting 20 per cent. of his scholarship to this debt of gratitude. Had the scholarship not been large enough to admit of this, he would certainly have gone to Wellington. But as it was he really did not waver. The call of the higher University work was irresistible. And this brings him to a new widening-out of his experiences.

AT THE AGE OF TWENTY-ONE

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XV

University Life in London

Friendly sparring. At the age of twenty, X. could no longer expect that every new experience should be, as hitherto, a sort of epoch. The only thing to record of his voyage to England is the formation of a friendship. Out of the seven other passengers there was only one with whom it was possible to "converse," in Dr. Johnson's sense. C. was several years older than X., an Oxonian, a brilliant journalist, something of an author, very witty, unattached to any cause or any mode of thought, an irresponsible spectator of the comedy of life, delighting in smashing the ideals (he called them idols) of his friends. It was of course not a fair match, but X. sallied forth into the fray with the confidence of a youthful David. Their very first serious conversation lasted from just after dinner to 3 a.m. Such discussions did X. no harm. C. lacked the driving power which moral earnestness and sincerity alone can give. Every little victory he won, and they were many, was to him just a joke. But it was good skirmishing exercise. It taught X. the weak points in his armour, and it was a great lesson in argument without ill-humour. The friendship thus begun lasted for many years, and though the controversies waxed hotter as time went on, on neither side were feelings ever ruffled.

His teachers. On arriving in England, X. decided on University College, London. The Jameson scholarship left him free to choose any University in the world, but the Gilchrist scholarship (the only time it was ever given in South

Africa) limited his choice to London or Edinburgh. Some friends urged him to sacrifice the Gilchrist and go to Cambridge: they told him there were bursaries going which would easily compensate for the loss. But a bird in the hand was worth two in the bush. Moreover he felt that if he went to Cambridge he should be tempted to specialise in mathematics, and already he was against specialising: he wanted the freedom of all-round training. He was soon glad of his choice, for mathematics (which he has always loved intensely) has a very "drying" effect on the mind. It was his legal studies that opened his mind to philosophy. Croom Robertson was a very illuminating teacher in psychology: and, in books, Austin and Bentham were his chief masters in method. The latter especially has no superior in the remorseless application of logic to practical ethics and politics. As for political economy, it repelled him, nor could Jevons in any way reconcile him to it—a painstaking man, but about the most lifeless teacher X. ever had. He knew that Ruskin was wrong in hundreds of ways, but he preferred Ruskin with all his errors to the whole set of high-priests of the dismal science with all their exactitude. Theorise as much as we may, man is after all not a mere machine.

"The Brethren."

X. had not been long at college when the Plymouth Brethren made a dead set at him. They had evidently received private advice from South Africa that the young man was a promising case. This optimistic forecast was based on nothing else than the Bible readings already spoken of. If they had openly invited him to their meetings, he would have gone as an act of courtesy, and they would have soon found that he was not inclined their way at all. But they proceeded by way of stratagem. One of his fellow-students, known to him only as a "Christian,"

invited him to tea at his lodgings. X. duly turned up. He was surprised at seeing no signs of hospitality, and still more surprised when his host adopted an attitude of superior admonition, rebuking him for taking up law as a profession, on the ground that we must "provide things honest in the sight of all men." X. was strongly tempted to bid him mind his own business, but meekly suggested that that was exactly what he was trying to do, to provide South Africa with one more honest lawyer. Shortly after, the "host" looked at his watch and announced that they were taking tea elsewhere. X. somewhat bewildered, accompanied him and found himself in a company of special elect. It was a high and holy tea, and his presence at it was regarded evidently as an act of open adhesion to the sect. This "put his back up" and he resolved to fight his way out of it. The opportunity soon came. A gentleman with a bald head and a beard that made him look as if he had been theatrically "made up" for the part, sidled up to him, and with the loftiest and most oleaginous impressiveness said, "And how long have you known the Lord?" X. replied airily, "As far back as I can remember." This, though perfectly true, was not regarded as orthodox, and controversy began. Texts of Scripture were hurtling through the air. The innocent victim, instead of being a harmless lamb, turned out to be a sort of bull in a china shop. He was never invited again.

A sample of them.

These people are easily startled if you counter their attacks with Scripture. They fancy they are the only people who know it. Several years after this, when X. had become a Catholic priest, a certain Mr. K., a missioner of that sect, made a frontal attack on him when on a visit in a relative's house. Again the attack was the result of a little conspiracy. Mr.

K. handed over a small hymn-book of his own compilation and said, "What do you think of that?" X. handed it back without opening it and replied, "It has the merit of brevity." "Yes, yes, yes: but the contents, now." On the book being opened at the title-page, the motto was revealed, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." It was once more handed back, with the remark, "Mr. K., when you quote a text, you should quote it in its entirety, with its condition if it has one." "Oh, but, my dear young friend, the beauty of that text is that there is no condition—full, free, absolutely unconditional salvation." And so on, a regular tirade. When he paused for breath, X. put in, "That's all very well for a sermon, Mr. K.; but my memory of the text is: 'If we walk in the light, we have fellowship one with another, *and* the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.' You see it *has* a condition, '*if* we walk in the light'; and, if you will allow me to say so, it depends a good deal on what light you walk in." It took a good deal of floundering to enable that man to regain his balance. X. subsequently heard that this Mr. K. had given up all religious faith, and was bringing up his children without any knowledge of the Bible at all. So much for substituting emotionality for faith.

XVI

The College Group

Companions. There were at University College several young men of earnest character and outstanding ability. There was Montefiore, who has since done distinguished service for the children of Israel. There was Tarbolton, almost supreme among them, who took no degree and went in for no competition, because he said learning was for its own sake inducement enough for him and, his father being well-to-do, he did not care to try to take a bursary from those who might need it more. He became a Congregational clergyman. So did C. F. W. Wood. There was S. W. Bowser, who became a leader in the Baptist community, and whose friendship X. holds to the present day. The same is to be said of Jacob Gould Schurman, since President of Cornell, and now U.S. Ambassador in China. There was M. J. M. Hill, who got every prize he ever tried for, no matter what the subject, and thus helped his mother to educate the younger children: he has since been Vice-Chancellor of London University. There was one who is now Sir Oliver Lodge, who has done so much to stem the tide of materialism. There was Brynmôr Jones, most eloquent member of the Welsh Liberal Party, also knighted. Another was B. Paul Neumann, novelist and philanthropist. It is a pleasure to recall such names. It is, of course, impossible to analyse the influence exerted by them. Young men act and react in many ways on one another. But it was impossible to come into familiar contact with such personalities without receiving many impulses to-

wards truth and honour. Doubtless, in so large a college, there were characters of less happy fibre, but X. did not find them out—or they did not find him.

A religious discussion.

Such companionship was mainly in the classes, or the debating society, or the reading room. But there was also a society meeting for prayer and religious discussion. One of the leaders of it was studying at the hospital in preparation for the work of a medical missionary. A reminiscence of this phase comes from a paper which X. read before the society and which raised a keen discussion. This paper, which happens to have been preserved in his Bible, is here reproduced in its entirety. It is somewhat crude, the preamble too long, and the main thesis too short: in fact, he was called upon in the discussion to state more fully "what he was driving at." But it is a record of his state of mind at the time, and it shows that his dissatisfaction with his religious position was growing. It was the same complaint. Protestantism, as he knew it, was not up to the Bible. Out of what he now knows as the four chief mysteries of Christendom, Protestants have retained only two—the Incarnation and the Trinity. His complaint now is that the Trinity was not grasped practically as Scripture reveals it. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit was too nebulously held. Let the document speak for itself, but let it be borne in mind that it is the work of a youth not yet trained in theology.

READ ISAIAH XXXII

Paper on the Trinity.

In glancing through the Bible from beginning to end, we are very much struck by the constant progress. This has been remarked by J. S. Mill in his usual clear and logical manner. I shall quote his words, and while reading them we cannot help sighing to think that

he did not go one step further and assign the true ultimate cause of this progress while the character of all other religions has been stereotyped, if not degenerating. After speaking of the Hindoos he says: "In contrast with these nations let us consider the example of an opposite character afforded by another Oriental people—the Jews. They too had an absolute monarchy and a hierarchy, and their organised institutions were as obviously of sacerdotal origin as those of the Hindoos. But neither their kings nor their priests ever obtained the exclusive moulding of their character. Their religion gave existence to an inestimably precious unorganised institution—the Order of Prophets. Whoever can divest himself of the habit of reading the Bible as if it were one book, which until lately was equally inveterate in Christians and in unbelievers, sees with admiration the vast interval between the morality and religion of the Pentateuch, or even of the historical books (the unmistakable work of Hebrew Conservatives of the sacerdotal order), and the morality and religion of the Prophecies: a distance as wide as between these last and the gospels."

What then is the cause of this progress? I think without doubt—the gradual unfolding of the knowledge of God. The early Israelites knew God as their creator and lawgiver, as a God of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, as a jealous God, and yet showing mercy to thousands in them that love him: in the Prophets we see the first yearnings after the fatherhood of God, the first general longings for the Messiah, and the first hardly perceptible germs of the knowledge of the Holy Spirit. It is given to our dispensation to know the Father through the Son by the grace of the Holy Spirit: and it will be given to the next to be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

At first sight it would seem as if I had chosen this chapter for the sake of the 15th verse only: "Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high." But if we examine the chapter closely we shall find that, in addition to being a glorious poem in itself, it gives a very clear idea, first of the coming of Christ, and then of the fruits of the Spirit—which are love, joy, peace, righteousness.

The meanings of the word Spirit are very various: I have looked throughout the Old Testament and do not find a single passage where the writer seemed to have an idea of a third person in the Trinity. To the present day the salutation of the Jews is "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is a Unity," and they do not, nor ever did, attach to the expression the deep and mysterious meaning of Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity.

Suppose we examine a few of the most striking instances. In Genesis i:—"The spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters"; if we glance at an evidently parallel passage in Psalm xxxiv 6:—"By the word of the Lord were the heavens made and all the host of them by the *breath* of his mouth."

In Joel we see "I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh," etc. But look at Isaiah xliv 3:—"I will pour my spirit upon thy seed and my blessing upon thy offspring." In this case the parallelism of Hebrew poetry excludes the idea of personality.

In Isaiah lxi 1:—"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me." Refer this passage to chapter xi 2: "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding."

"The Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it"—breath. In the vast majority of instances "Spirit of God" is written by the poets as an Hebraism for "God," though of course I maintain that God meant these words to bear a deeper and secondary meaning to posterity.

In this respect I think Isaiah was the most favoured of the prophets. In the fortieth chapter, another poem of mighty genius, we read: "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him?" And again: "The Lord God and his Spirit hath sent me."

In Zechariah vii 12: "The word which the Lord of Hosts hath sent in his Spirit by the prophets."

In Micah iii 8:—"I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord." In the last four passages we have very clearly brought out the special attribute of the Holy Spirit—inspiration, instruction, power.

How thankful we ought to be that our lot is cast in these times when God has so much more fully revealed himself: and how much more has he a right to expect from us in consequence! And yet it is strange how little the Holy Spirit is really acknowledged as a person. We speak of him as an influence, as a power: with the enlightenment of the New Testament we still cling to the sentiments of the Old Testament. Christ said the Holy Ghost would be to us a Paraclete—borrowing the expression from ancient law—the one who stands by and assists a defendant on his trial. We are on our trial before God: our Paraclete intercedes for us with groanings that cannot be uttered: our Judge is also our Advocate, and the very hall of justice is the mercy seat. I am convinced that the more we acknowledge the Holy Spirit, the more we pray for and follow his instructions, the higher will our Christian life be, the greater will be our power.

XVII

The Break with Puritanism

The Puritan Mrs. Grundy.

It was about this time that X. shook off the social trammels in which he had been brought up. It was not a reaction against discipline: he had experienced too much of the better side of discipline to have any desire of revolting against it. Strong self-discipline was to him then, at least theoretically, as it has always been, the very salt of life. But a good deal of Puritanism seemed, on riper experience, to be rather unauthorised discipline of others than any useful discipline of self. X. had a natural inclination to prefer Bohemia to Mrs. Grundy, and he could not see that holy Scripture had any definite preference for the latter.

The concrete form of what he now felt to be trammels consisted of rigid sabbatarianism and the complete banning of certain kinds of "worldliness"—*e.g.*, theatres, dances and various other species of "pleasure." The flaw in the whole thing was a vagueness of definition which introduced curious anomalies into the Puritan conscience. Of course he knew that *Hudibras* was an unkindly caricature, but he could not help admitting that there was something of truth in the gibe,

> Compound for sins they are inclined to
> By damning those they have no mind to.

He knew of a case where the exclamations "hang it" and "blow it" were regarded as terrible sins, being merely substitutes for "damn it"; yet the mother herself frequently used "bother it" and

" botheration," and the children were freely allowed the compromise.

Moreover the Puritans had a " worldliness " and " pleasures " of their own, and it passed the wit of man, or at least of this particular young man, to draw any intelligible line between what was quite permissible and what was deadly sin.

Add to this that the habit of cornering some kinds of " worldliness " and " pleasure " for personal use and denouncing other people's varieties as sins led inevitably to a pharisaic attitude of judgement that conflicted strangely with the spirit of holy Scripture.

Lack of philosophy.

The vagueness of definition spoken of a short while ago springs from the fact that Protestantism has never developed any form of philosophy for itself, whether by way of metaphysics or by way of morals. In intellectual philosophy they have no theory of the relations of the material to the spiritual, no clear teaching of the immortality of the soul, and as to the union of body and soul they have fallen below even the level of Plato and Aristotle. Protestant colleges habitually use text-books which logically lead directly to scepticism. A popular text-book on logic, at least recently in use in Christian colleges here, calmly lays down the assumption, " *Of course* there is no generic difference between the mind of a man and the mind of a mouse." Why did it not say flea or oyster ? The only intellectual position contributed by Protestantism as such was that of the early Calvinists, who hotly opposed the Freedom of the Will in order to bolster up their doctrine of Predestination—thereby playing straight into the hands of unbelief. Modern Calvinists appear to have given up both the theory and the doctrine, but it was too late—shutting the stable door after the horse was stolen. This intellectual weakness

of Protestantism proved a great danger to X. shortly after, as will appear: it nearly cost him his faith in Christianity.

What is Worldliness?

But it was the moral difficulty that was baffling him. What exactly was "worldliness"? After a good deal of thought (and it is surprising how hard it is to think clearly in the teeth of inherited traditions, habits and fashions) it seemed to him vaguely that every man carried his own worldliness with him—that in fact worldliness was nothing else than the power which visible and temporal things have to blot out the unseen and the eternal. One man can work through a temperature which would wither up the energies of another. Mathematical, scientific, philosophical, even theological studies pursued with disproportioned energy may dry up the affections which are necessary to poise the heart in its right attitude towards things divine. Money-making, sport, politics, business, are all of them worldlinesses of their kind.

The stage.

The matter was brought to a crisis by a concrete step. On a very minute scale it was like Cæsar crossing the Rubicon. Henry Irving was giving his famous production of *Hamlet* at the Lyceum. Why not go to it? The highest drama in the world produced with maximum effectiveness of art—where did the evil come in? To many the hesitation may seem absurd, but it must be remembered that the theatre-world had been much misrepresented to X., and it had been put to him that those who attend apparently innocuous performances make themselves responsible for the vices of the whole system. X. declined the responsibility and went to the Lyceum. It was a memorable experience, as old stage-goers know, but memorable to him chiefly as a newly opened doorway to Art and as a deliberate step towards self-enfranchisement.

Dancing. A parallel case soon followed. Readers must please excuse the multiplication of such trifles. They meant very much at the time, and to tell of them is to add touches of colour necessary to the picture. The point is to show how the externalities of Puritanism were one by one given up without any unfaithfulness to its spiritual teaching or sense of duty or unselfish ideals. It was not in pursuit of pleasure, but in carefully considered adaptation to the rational demands of social life. A student friend introduced X. to some people who lived outside of London, and some very pleasant intercourse followed. The two students were invited to a big dance these people were giving, and as it was far were also asked to stop the night. This brought Puritan rigidity into direct conflict with courtesy. To refuse the invitation would be an offence both to his own companion and to his friends. Was it possible for X. to say to people who were obviously much better Christians than himself, "Thank you, no: I don't approve of your moral proceedings?" Anything rather than be a Pharisee! The invitation was accepted, and as the previous interval was fortunately a long one, X. went in for a strenuous course of dancing lessons. He did not take very kindly to it, but he did not want to make a fool of himself.

When the evening came, X. noticed a pleasant looking girl sitting by herself and looking very lonely. He asked for an introduction, and some time after the first dance saw that she was still lonely. Her conversation was as pleasant as her appearance. She was probably a teacher, for she proved to be unexpectedly well-informed, and she had come to the ball the only way she could, without a chaperone. X. thought himself rather fortunate, danced with her several times, took her in to supper, and saw her to her cab never to see her or hear of her again.

The next morning at breakfast his hostess thanked him before them all. "The girl," she said, "is hardly known to us, and unfortunately she was overlooked in our arrangements. She told me you had given her a very pleasant time, and as she knows you are stopping here, she thought we had arranged it. You have completely rectified a most unhappy oversight." There was luck. Contrast that with the verdict of his mother and aunts—for of course he told—when they shook their heads over their dear one's lapse into the sinful paths of pleasure.

XVIII

In Doubting Castle

Bohemia. The "worldliness" into which X. had so deplorably lapsed, as his friends would put it, never did him the slightest harm. A dance was to him no more than a skating rink, and he has danced probably no more than ten times in his life. The theatre was just Bohemia, and in Bohemia, as elsewhere, you can always choose your own company. It has its own ideals and its own reverences which would surprise those who stand aloof and scorn it. He was far too much interested in Art to look at the stage from any other point of view. Whether in literature or in music or in the drama the pleasure for him was wholly intellectual. Between the scenes it was as easy to think seriously, or even to pray, as anywhere else.

"Seeing life." He had a friend, an artist, who went everywhere and saw everything, but who lived as clean a life as can be expected from any man. This artist used sometimes to say to him, "Come and let us see life." They would go in the spirit of Haroun Alraschid and his Vizier. One night they looked in at a low pub, a place where (if you were hard up) you could buy a ha'p'orth of swipes—swipes being the sweepings of the bar counter, and therefore an indescribable mixture of beer, porter, spirits, aerated waters and London dust. There was a chimney corner where the *habitués* gathered for talk—and it was no unseemly talk either. This night a man came in and announced that he was down on his luck—not even a halfpenny for swipes—but he wanted to sit and

talk. None of those there could ever afford to stand treat, and of course for the "toffs" to offer it would be a deadly insult. The barman, against his own interests, allowed the petition. But an aristocrat, who could that night afford a fourpenny, objected and declared that no man should have a place in the corner unless he could pay his footing. The argument waxed hot. At last the altruistic barman vaulted over the counter, stood up to the aristocrat, flattened him out, proudly instated the impecunious one, vaulted back and calmly went on dispensing drinks and swipes. As the two friends left, the artist said: "That has done me good: we have seen a bit of human nature at its very best."

Danger from science.

The real worldliness which became a danger was that against which X. had never been warned. It came from the study of science, especially biology. That was the time when the influence of Huxley and Tyndall was at its height. They were the "advanced thinkers." Darwinism was all the fashion and was having its own way to an extent far beyond Darwin himself. There was a cocksureness about it that carried young students off their feet. Herbert Spencer, "our one philosopher," was actually reverenced. Into this mess X. was plunged without any preliminary Christian philosophy. It all seemed so inevitable. The problem seemed to be so completely solved. It was not that X. had any definite previous views on the subject: he simply had not faced the question before. He was just as much surprised at the phrases "fixity of species" and "special creation" as he was at "natural selection" and "survival of the fittest." He certainly had never thought that species never varied, nor had it ever entered his mind that every kind of cat and every kind of dog and every kind of beetle had had a particular creation all to itself. His position, if

suddenly questioned, would probably have been that of Topsy, " 'Specs it growed." This unpreparedness made him an easy victim.

What greatly increased the effect was the almost uncanny skill of his teacher in physiology, Professor Allchin. He never lost a moment, he never missed a name. His demonstrations always showed exactly what was intended, and the moment the last student had seen it, he had finished the explanation, and was ready for the next point. He would make a sign and the attendant would knock a rabbit on the head: then, talking to the point all the time, he would have that rabbit cut open and pinned on a board and shown round to demonstrate the peristaltic action of the intestines, and his explanation took just the time that that rabbit took to travel round the class. Without a note before him he would work his way through the most intricate classifications of the animal kingdom. He carried scientific lecturing to the point of high art. And it is just that kind of uncanny skill that impresses the mind of youth. He had also a grim humour. He had once promised the sight of a fresh human stomach: the next time he said, " I have to apologise for not keeping my promise; but I regret to say that an event I confidently anticipated has not yet occurred."

Perplexity.

Here, then, was X., carried off his feet by what seemed to be the absolute demonstration of the Evolution theory, and plunged into the question of Immortality. If we derive our soul from our parents, and if going back and back these parents are lower and lower in the scale of life, what is the logical position of intellectuality and immortality ?

And if immortality goes, what is left ?

Let every man who has never known perplexity bless God for his immunity. To come to a pass in life when all that is good and beautiful seems

hopelessly divorced from what is true is a most unenviable experience.

It is not true to say that X. ever gave up his faith in Christ, but for a while he had a horrible feeling that it might not be true. He seemed to be a ship, helmless, floating on an uncharted sea.

In these reminiscences it is only the intellectual movement that is being portrayed. A complete picture would have to tell of moral undercurrents tending to make intellectual aberrations possible. But even if such undercurrents could be accurately charted, this is not the place for the confession to be made. It must be enough here to say that, perhaps from pride, perhaps from sloth, perhaps from any of a list of sins which every man can make for himself, there arose for X. spiritual clouds which obscured his vision of faith, and made him feel as if no religious experience he had ever had could be of any avail.

This was his state of mind at the beginning of April, 1876.

XIX

Over to France

The state of doubt described in the last chapter never went as far as denial of religion. X. clung to the practice of prayer, and never questioned the divine personality and teaching of Christ, nor that life and immortality which he brought to light through the Gospel. But he was sorely bewildered by the apparent discrepancy between two sets of truths.

Logical solution.

In this intellectual struggle he came eventually to a sort of solution which satisfied him for the time being. And, curiously enough, he reached this interim solution the very night before that visit to France which was to be such a crisis in his life. The problem has engaged his thoughts for so many years that it is not now possible, for want of contemporary documents, to be very precise as to the form the solution then took. It certainly subtracted the question of immortality from the investigations of science—the former being a matter of reality behind phenomena, and the latter being able to deal with phenomena alone. In accordance with this, all that Physical Science can do is to give *quasi*-explanations. That is to say, suppose God created the world as a going concern, he would necessarily create it as if it had always obeyed the laws it was thenceforward going to obey. Whatever he creates must have an *apparent* past history, and it is only appearance that evolution theories can talk about. When X. arrived at some such position as this, it became obvious to him that the road was clear ahead for both religion and science.

Meanwhile, however, his science had progressed more than his religion. The absorption of energies in worldly study, the spiritual obscurity induced by bewilderment, the isolation from due spiritual influences almost necessary to a youth living in lodgings in London, had, while not inhibiting private prayer altogether, nevertheless weakened it, and at the same time had sapped the strength that comes from corporate and united action. Still, it was a great grace that, at the very moment when a large new experience was about to open up before him, he was able to say "Line clear" for any spiritual development that might offer itself.

Previous correspondence.

He had arranged to spend Easter week in France. There were friends of his staying at the Abbaye de Jouarre, in the diocese of Meaux, one of the old royal abbeys of France with a history of more than a thousand years. These friends were Miss Makepeace and her niece. The former had become a Catholic in her youth, had gone to France as a governess, had lived there for many years, and was now in retirement at the Abbey as a boarder. Her niece, who was not a Catholic, had gone there to finish her education, especially in French and music. X. had never met Miss Makepeace, but some letters had passed between them, with naturally a small amount of friendly controversy. Her last letter said: "When I first became a Catholic and lived with them, I was first of all astonished, and then I became indignant, because I found them one and all so unlike what they are represented to be by Protestants and others. . . You see we differ widely in our religious views and opinions, but I daresay we shall be very good friends when we meet. If possible try to be here on Holy Saturday: I should like you to hear the nuns sing on Easter Sunday."

In his reply X. wrote: "I quite agree with most

of what you said on the subject of my last letter. What I said of persecution was giving not my opinion, but that of Englishmen generally. Persecution was, I think, a vice of the times which is gradually becoming extinct; and if a religion is false because it has at any time been unfortunately connected with persecution, then there is no true religion on the face of the earth. Every religious opinion must stand or fall by its own merits, irrespective of the faults of those who maintain it. To say that people have different religious views is only another way of saying that human reason is fallible. Truth has too many sides for us to be able to take it in at a glance; and if the side that one man sees *seems* to contradict the side that another man sees, it is only in seeming, and hereafter no doubt these rough places will be made smooth.

"For myself, I feel daily less trust in mere doctrines and more in actions; and if anyone holds what my reason cannot accept as true doctrine, and yet leads a life immeasurably above mine in love and devotion to our common Lord and Saviour, far be it from me to presume to rebuke him. I think, when we meet, we shall manage to look, not on the points where we differ, but on the points where we agree, and we shall perhaps be astonished to find how many such there are."

Unconscious impertinence.

The letter is not an admirable one. The unconsciously affected intellectual superiority from a youth of twenty-one writing to a woman older and much wiser than himself was just part of the "cheerful insolence" of youth. Most young people have it, and in him it was unfortunately increased by the Protestant assumption that it is the duty of everybody, however incompetent, to reason out his own religion from a difficult Book of some thousand pages, instead of accepting God's definite message delivered by an

authorised living Teacher. In other words, he did not yet know the difference between faith and opinion. Yet he was trying to be fair. And he had been reading history, and was not unacquainted with Hallam's dictum that "Persecution is the deadly original sin of the reformed Churches, that which cools every honest man's zeal for their cause in proportion as his reading becomes more extensive."

Unsuspecting self-confidence.

His moral attitude was quite sincere, and he was beginning to suspect that in this regard he had much to learn from Catholicism. He would indeed have said pretty much the same if it had been a Buddhist nunnery he was going to see. He had never to his knowledge spoken to a Catholic. He had never read a Catholic book. Intellectually he thought he had nothing to learn from that quarter. With his Bible in his portmanteau he sincerely fancied that he was going to bring some light into dark places. He plunged into France without any misgivings in that direction. He did not believe current stories of immorality; in fact, neither from his parents nor from Dr. Andrew Murray had he ever heard such things. But he was not unaffected by his grandmother's scornful phrase, "You might as well go to the Papists at once." He was going to get a great surprise.

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XX

The Abbey of Jouarre

Did not know it was Good Friday.

How completely out of touch X. was with Catholic life may be measured by the fact that he did not even advert to its being Good Friday when he arrived in Paris. He went out after dinner to see the gaieties, but found all dark, even the Champs Elysées—nothing but the street lamps alight. He returned to his hotel grumbling, "I thought they said Paris was a gay place." In his Puritan upbringing there had been no Feasts or Fasts. Even Sunday was an obligation inherited from the Old Law rather than a Feast of the Resurrection.

He had never, to his knowledge, even spoken to a Catholic. His little correspondence with Miss Makepeace had been his only communication. History and literature gave him no living sense of common interests. Once as a small boy he had gone into a Catholic church with some companions out of sheer curiosity. The service must have been Benediction, but it impressed him no more than if it had been a Jewish synagogue.

He had a vague idea that "they couldn't really mean it." External forms, he thought, could easily be stereotyped and come to signify very little, as with Buddhism or Mohammedanism; and more than that he did not expect to find.

Merely poetry?

There was, of course, the position of the blessed Virgin in English Protestant poetry—for example, Wordsworth's beautiful line, "Our tainted nature's solitary boast." But as to that he remembered the saying

that the real beliefs of one stage of humanity become the fanciful poetry of the next. In fact, the Christmas before he had written a little "poem" on the Nativity, though he did not keep the Feast himself, and had sent it to Jouarre. Writing of the Babe, he could not leave the Mother out of the picture; but he spoke of her as if of a Fairy Queen. He was quite surprised when Miss Makepeace said she could not understand how anybody could write like that without being a Catholic. Though the verses were liked, he did not keep them, feeling that they were not sincere enough for a sacred subject. He learnt at least that to them Mary was something more than a Fairy Queen.

Church music.

He reached the Abbey on the Saturday afternoon, and of course heard the nuns sing on Easter Sunday, as Miss Makepeace had desired. It was his first hearing of plain chant. The choir of nuns (about seventy) had been well trained, and even their monotoning of Compline was a pleasure to listen to, with its maintenance of pitch, its well-judged pauses, and its due light and shade. The psalm chants won his heart at once, but the more elaborate forms were to him elusive, the tonality of the ecclesiastical modes being unfamiliar. The most he could feel was that it was all quite unworldly, very devotional and utterly devoid of showiness. But, after all, music was trivial compared with the flood of new experiences which rushed upon him. They came to him all together in those crowded eight days, and he finds great difficulty in now arranging the separate story of their several influences.

An Abbey of 1,000 years.

First of all there was the place itself. X. stopped, of course, at the Aumônerie (chaplaincy), a building probably of the early eighteenth century. Across the road there was the chapel, quite modern: next to it was a

squat tower of the original foundation, pre-Norman and of the ninth century. The residential part of the Abbey seemed to be of the transition period between Gothic and Renaissance (perhaps sixteenth century). There may be mistakes about the intermediate dates, but none about the old tower, which had witnessed more than 1,000 years (with a short break at the Revolution) of the same life—a community of women, wearing the same habit, saying the same prayers, singing the same chants, doing the same works of beneficence, thinking the same thoughts, upholding the same ideals, never varying in either faith or practice. The Abbess of the day carried one back to Chaucer's Prioress, now ancient to us, and for five centuries before that. There is something very appealing to the imagination in a thousand years of continuous life, whether in a tree or in a human institution. And there was nothing of the stereotyped or stagnant or fossilised, as X. had expected. Everything was alive, spiritually and intellectually. Agree with them or not, you could not ignore their liveliness. They were even up-to-date in unexpected ways. At that time (1876), when few English schools were so equipped, they had a well-appointed gymnasium for the school-girls, and it was in the basement of the ninth-century tower. They also had a proper gymnasium costume, which, however, X. was not allowed to see; for, though their practice was modern, their moral ideals remained early Christian.

All this, as the French say, gave one to think, and one of X.'s first problems was the search for the reasons of this permanence. After all, how many such permanences do we know in the world ?

XXI

The Aumônerie

The chaplain. The prospect of living for some eight days under the same roof with a Catholic priest was regarded by X. with a certain amount of apprehension. His preconceptions were necessarily formed on his knowledge of Protestant "history" and ultra-Protestant fiction—the difference between the two being only a matter of literary form. He was prepared for the self-hypnotised dupe, or the wily schemer, or the sentimental fanatic. Of the first and third he had no fear; against the second there was the Bible in his portmanteau, and he fancied that, in spite of his feebleness in French, he could show his opponent a thing or two. The reality came as a pleasant surprise.

M. Legendre was a man of transparent simplicity of character. Whatever his religion had done for him, it had certainly not spoiled his gentleness, his kindliness, and his large share of French politeness, which when vivified by Christian charity is the highest type of politeness in the world. He had no outstanding intellectual excellence; he had barely the average seminary education, perfectly fitting him for his appointed work in the world, but apparently leaving him few vistas beyond. In politics, in the problems of science, in philosophical speculations, he seemed to take no special interest. He was an unsophisticated normal human being, happy in his life and faithful to all its duties. There was no danger of controversy; he would answer a question in a straightforward way without enlarging on it, and with the most delicate courtesy he refrained from saying anything that might be thought intru-

sive. This was X's first impression, and subsequent years of acquaintance only confirmed the truth of it. M. Legendre was an Israelite indeed in whom there was no guile.

The pensioner. There were two other inmates of the Aumônerie. One was a very old priest, retired from active service, almost in his dotage, quaint and cranky, but by no means ill-natured. M. Legendre's manner towards this colleague, some thirty years his senior, who had come to Jouarre as to a haven of rest, was perfection. He watched over all his needs, smiled at his oddities, drew out his reminiscences which he must have heard a hundred times already, and without any condescension gave him the freedom of childhood. France perhaps understands that freedom of childhood better than any other nation. That, maybe, is the reason why they use their language with such perfection in conversation. Even babies are listened to with courtesy in their babbling. When the principle is applied to the wanderings of dotage, it is positively beautiful.

The protégé. The third inmate was a poor half-witted, misshapen youth whom they always called Monsieur Auguste. He was a pitiable object. His features were drawn, his limbs unsymmetrical, his movements ungainly; he dribbled at the mouth, and for a while was most unpleasant to look upon. He was a grown-up child. His family, of fairly high rank, were ashamed of him and got rid of him by hiding him in the Chaplaincy of this Abbey. They lost much grace by so doing, for this unfortunate malformed creature, permanently a child, was a saintly child. Between him and M. Legendre there was a touching affection. In all ordinary life one would pass this youth as an idiot. He would say the most ridiculous things about the usual topics of conversation, but he spent

hours every day in prayer, and on all questions of grace his mind was fully alive. One day he spoke of St Paul as a Doctor of the Church. M. Legendre said, "But, Monsieur Auguste" (he never forgot the Monsieur), "St Paul is an Apostle, not a Doctor." The reply flashed back, "Then why is he called Doctor Gentium?" Once, somewhat later on, when he and X. were alone, something brought up the question of gratitude, and this poor creature, deprived of almost all the joys of youth, banished from a family in which he ought to be enjoying the comforts of wealth, poured out his heart in a flow of words of which X. had not thought him capable; he dwelt on the boundless lovingkindness of our heavenly Father, and spoke as if he himself were the most favoured being on earth. Long before he had done, tears were in his hearer's eyes. Assuredly the religious system which could produce such fruit from an almost sapless twig was something to be reckoned with in the explanation of the world.

It may be said here that X. is idealising. Of course he is. Idealising is always our natural approach to truth. It is only the cynic who does not idealise, and he misses nearly all the truth in the world. We have to idealise even ourselves in order to be bearable in our own sight. Every new experience comes with a rosy dawn and gradually fades into, or brightens into, the light of common day. In early morn we see with more colour; at noon with clearer form; but it is the same thing we see all the time. M. Auguste died early, as might have been expected, and his death was as saintly as his poor maimed life had been.

The lay-sister.

The domestic arrangements were in the hands of a little old lay-sister, Sœur Agathe, who came over daily from the Abbey for the purpose. She never knew how carefully she was being studied as the first of a new

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THE CRYPT AND THE SARCOPHAGUS OF ST TELCHILDE, THE ROYAL FOUNDER OF THE ABBEY OF JOUARRE

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species. The choir-sisters, being strictly cloistered, could be spoken with only by appointment and then only behind a formidable grating or grille. Sœur Agathe had grown old gracefully and cheerfully. There was a smile lurking behind every one of her many wrinkles. Her very presence indicated quiet and active happiness. She was a living contradiction of that Puritan tradition, the falsity of which seemed to grow with every fresh opportunity of testing it. It was a treat to see her "mother" poor M. Auguste, tucking up his table-napkin for him, wiping his eyes, gaily laughing with him (never *at* him) over his many mistakes.

Once, passing the open door of the kitchen, X. peeped in and saw Sœur Agathe stirring the soup over the fire, with a large ladle in one hand and her rosary in the other, both implements in simultaneous use. It was an object-lesson in the combination of work and prayer. That her prayer did not spoil her work was curiously shown one day. It was Friday, and Miss Makepeace asked X., "Did they give you meat at dinner to-day?" He went back in memory over the meal, but was unable to answer. It was the first dinner he had ever had without meat, and he had not noticed the absence of it.

This household naturally caused X. to revise many of his views of life. It was like a quartette of childhood—the second childhood of the worn-out old priest, the unaltering childhood of the half-witted youth, the mature simplicity of a man who had heeded the Kingdom of Heaven lesson of the "child set in the midst," and the perennial childhood which refused to leave the eyes or the heart of a little old woman who had spent some forty or fifty years in "making drudgery divine."

XXII

Books and Questions

Finding Catholic life so vitally different from his preconceptions, and on so much higher a plane than he had been taught to expect, X. felt a wave of indignation against the mass of misrepresentation of which he had been a victim and a sense of responsibility for the extent to which he had been deceived. He took the nearest way to shake himself free from this responsibility, and on about the third day of his visit formally apologised to the Abbess for the unworthy estimate in which he had hitherto regarded convent life.

The Imitation.

About the same time he found lying on a table in the Aumônerie a well-thumbed copy of the *Imitation of Christ*. The book was new to him. Opening it at random, as his usual way is, he was at once carried away by a sort of fascination. He read for hours. The artless simplicity, the unworldliness of the style, the tenderness of sentiment (without any sentimentality) based on a profound mysticism which X. felt rather than understood, the atmosphere of sanctity, the wisdom that seemed to probe the depths of the heart, the spiritual unction, appropriate soul-music transferred as it were from Paradise without a jarring note, all this was a feast of beauty the more enchanting because so utterly unexpected. The next morning X. asked M. Legendre, "Is this a typical book in your Church?" The answer was, "Next to the New Testament it is the most typical of all our books."

Here then was more food for thought. At the very time when Protestantism was beginning to

break away from the Catholic Church, that Church was expressing her true mind (for insincerity or affectation is unthinkable in connection with the *Imitation*) in strains loftier than any form of Protestantism has ever been able to reach. Later on X. learned that James I asked a group of his Bishops: "Why cannot any of you write books of devotion like those of the Bishop of Geneva (St Francis de Sales)?" Well might he ask. By their fruits ye shall know them. O. W. Holmes, speaking of Keble's *Rosebud* and coupling it with St Francis Xavier's *O Deus ego amo te*, says, "Such a poem as *The Rosebud* makes one's heart a proselyte to the culture it grows from." Far more could this be said of the *Imitation*.

Long afterwards X. found that this book was much in favour with Protestants as well, usually in a mutilated form. He thought then, as he thinks now, that it is a mean and insincere proceeding to steal and spoil and use as their own the very heart-cry of that Church whose spirit they are constantly reviling. His own people, at least, were consistent in the matter: it was a Popish book and that was the end of it; that was why he had never heard of it before.

The mutilation of the book chiefly consists in leaving out the fourth part—as if one should cut out the *Paradiso* of Dante's "Vision." But it was just this fourth part (on Holy Communion) which so rapidly advanced the solution of the problem already exercising X.'s mind—viz., what was the secret of the permanence of the new life around him?

The Catechism.

Following immediately on the reading of the *Imitation* came the desire to know more. If this was how they felt and prayed, what did they really believe and teach? Instead, however, of asking for some learned work

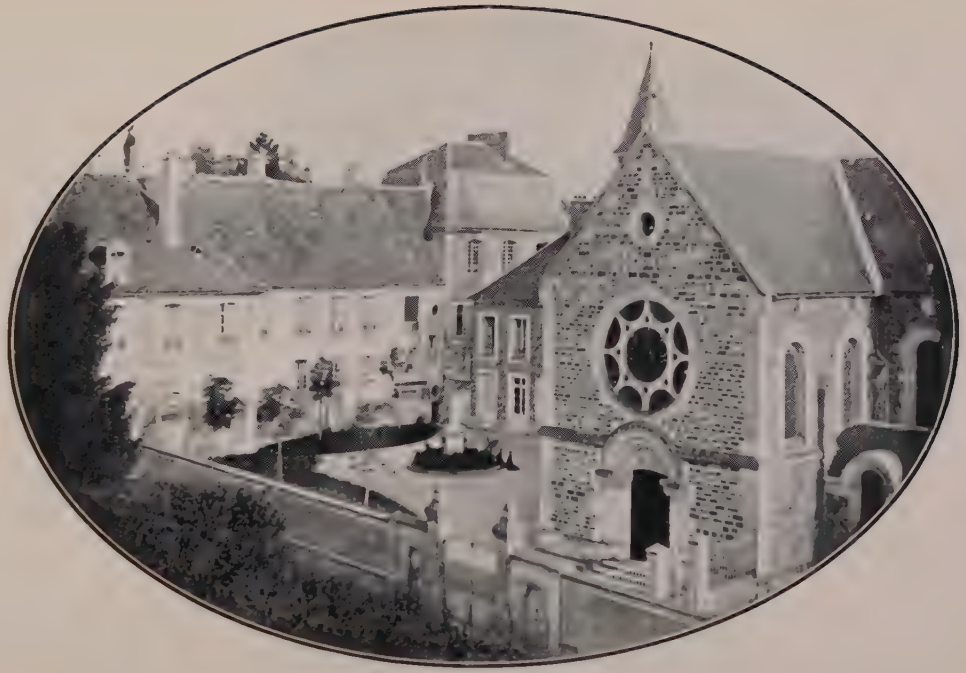
which might by human skill (as he still suspected) "make the worse appear the better reason," he asked for the children's catechism. The only catechism he had ever seen (and he had never read more than three questions of that) somewhat amused him by its characteristic beginning: "What is your name?" "M. or N." "Who gave you that name?" etc. And he has no love for the catechism form even now; but it was, and is, the accepted way of teaching, and he wanted to know what they told their children. And again he was surprised. The teaching was simple, sincere, straightforward, no cloudiness in theory, no cloaking of inconvenient mysteries—everything in sheer common sense that the child should believe and know and practise. He still has that little penny catechism, and says the morning prayers in French which it contains.

Sifting out differences.

What most surprised him was the logical coherence of the whole teaching. There were but three points of difference—the Living Authority, the Sacramental System, and the "Communion of Saints." The first of these was not yet a living problem to him. There was a mass of ingrained prejudice which made the very notion of a "Church" unwelcome to him. And surely he had problems enough for one week already. At any rate it did not occur to him to investigate it. He was contented for the time to differ: his "Church" was the Bible. The second point, the Sacramental System, will be considered in the next chapter.

Questions.

About the third, the Communion of Saints, he thought he would put some questions. The crude idea that, because these people had statues and pictures, therefore they were idolaters, he put aside as silly. Visible representations, whether actual or imaginative, of things that had once been really visible were



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obviously reasonable. If photography had existed in our Lord's days, we should now have photographs of him and his Mother and his disciples. If X. was going to remain a Protestant—and there was as yet not even a misgiving in that direction—there was no reason why he should also be a fool. The question now with him was as to the mode, the motive and the expediency of directly communicating with created beings in the other world.

He started with the mode. "When you address a prayer to the Virgin Mary or to a saint," he asked M. Legendre, "what reason have you for thinking that it reaches them?" "Those in bliss," was the reply, "*see* God, and in that vision of supreme Truth they see all that concerns them." Besides (X. forgets whether this came out in the conversation or from his own thoughts: the consideration belongs to the time anyway), those who believe in Guardian Angels can have no difficulty about this. If we have an intellectual being at our side with full knowledge of our mental and spiritual life, why may we not confidently speak to him, and why may he not be a messenger from us to heaven as he is a messenger from God to us?

Did X. believe in Guardian Angels? He remembered having once in his boyhood said something sceptical about it. The exquisite smile that comes over a baby's face in sleep makes fond mothers say the Angels are talking to them, and X. thought himself rather smart in referring that smile to reflex action. And as for the protective power of Angels over little children, he could not see when or why that power should be withdrawn. His mother severely rebuked him, quite rightly, for treating our Lord's well-known words so sceptically. She firmly believed in Guardian Angels for children. X. once more felt that there was something illogical about this. It was another case of Protestantism

going with the Bible a little way and then suddenly dropping it. Protestants believed in miracles all through the Old and New Testaments, and then made a rule (never hinted in Scripture) that after the first century God must not work miracles any more. So here they agreed to Guardian Angels for babies, but grown-up Protestants, forsooth, are beyond the need of angelic tutelage—as if we were not all but babies in God's sight.

As for the motive of spiritual communication with heaven, X. put his question this way: "I have a sister who died in early youth, of such innocence and piety that I cannot doubt her being in Heaven; suppose now I were to talk to her as a brother to a sister (trusting that my thoughts would reach her), would there be any essential difference between that and your communications with the saints?" The answer was, "No essential difference at all; only a difference of degree and universality." It really began to look as if these Catholics had a valid reason for everything they did.

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XXIII

The Secret of Permanence

Effect of the "Real Presence."

It did not take long for X. to discover that the mainspring of this new form of life around him was the absolute and unquestioning belief in the Real Presence of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. What the *Imitation* voiced as the crown of its matchless spirit of devotion animated everybody there. From early morning to the last thing at night this was the centre of everything there. And there was nothing formal about it. The day began with the Mass and Communion; it was punctuated by the Seven Hours of prayer; it was concluded by Compline and last evening devotions. These might indeed have been a mere routine round of formalities, but this supposition was negatived by the evident simplicity and sincerity of everybody concerned. And if more proof were wanted, there was the fact that X. never went into the chapel without finding silent worshippers there.

It may be asked how he came to make this observation. After his recent experience of doubt, he found himself in need of prayer, and though he did not believe as they did, yet a sanctuary in constant use had a restful air about it which lured him. There was no distracting worldly life around him; his thoughts were earnestly concentrated on the sources of grace, and an atmosphere of prayer is happily contagious. He went at all sorts of odd moments to this shrine, which, though materially renewed in recent times, nevertheless inherited the character

of a thousand years of devotion. Go when he would, he never found himself alone.

Was it real ?

Now, of course, he had known that Catholics professed this doctrine of Transubstantiation, but somehow it had seemed to him that it could not be more than an external profession. Many forms of religion have tenets and practices which by the mere force of human nature have become empty forms. Men cannot live on metaphors. Mere symbolism, however beautiful, and however enthusiastically hailed in its beginning, becomes threadbare with use.

> "I am half sick of shadows," said
> The Lady of Shalott.

Nor can men long live on the pretence that a shadow is the reality. For a reality reacts, and a shadow does not. A reaction may be imagined for a generation or two, but in the long run things find their level.

Yet here was this belief and practice, as living as it had been a thousand years before, and they still declared that they constantly experienced the reaction of the reality. As X. reflected over these things, the thought suddenly gripped his mind, "What if it were true!" If it were, it was surely the most beautiful thing in the world. If it were, it would alter the whole universe for him. *It* would be the Great Reality, and all visible things would be comparatively reduced to transient shadows. But *was* it true ?

What does the Word say ?

There was only one way of answering this question, which had thus suddenly become for the first time in his life an open one. It was too sacred to argue about. It was too delicate to ask questions about. X. shut himself up with his Bible, resolving with prayer to find out what God had really said. Did he not already know ? He knew, of course, all the separate

passages, which lay in his mind embedded each in its traditional Protestant interpretation. But it had never occurred to him to consider them stripped of this gloss, and above all it had never occurred to him to consider them all together.

This is not the place for a detailed exposition. We are considering the process of an individual mind, not what that mind might afterwards say to others. X. found that while it had been possible to him to wriggle in one way out of one passage and in another way out of another, it was not possible for him to wriggle in all these different ways at one and the same time. All the passages, taken as one complex, could bear no other meaning than that of a divine mystery and not of a human metaphor. The choice of time and place, the miraculous preparation for the rite, the solemnity of its inauguration, the previous promise and mystical doctrine uttered with such reiterated emphasis the year before in the synagogue of Capharnaum, when our Lord let some of his disciples depart from him rather than call them back with a metaphorical explanation: all this, and the wistful and significant silence of St John—" Jesus, having loved his own who were in the world, loved them to the end.—And when supper was over . . ." with the trenchant and illuminating rebuke of St Paul, " not discerning the Body of the Lord " (for how could they discern the Body if it were not there ?)—let other people shirk and explain as they might, for him the Word of God was clear. And with that clearness this mystery took its rightful place in the New Dispensation and cast its rays backwards into the Old. This was the Tree of Life in our restored Paradise, this was the Manna in the Wilderness, this was the Paschal Banquet and Sacrifice, this was the Show-bread in the Temple, this was the Food of Angels which sustained Elias in the desert for forty days until

he came to the Mount of God, this was the daily sacrifice of the Gentiles spoken of by Malachi the prophet. Beyond all question God had spoken to him a new word.

Conviction. He rose from his knees, went over to the chapel across the road, and there made his first act of faith in the sacred presence before him. And since God had given this as the centre of life, the pledge of immortality, and the culminating pinnacle of the devotion of the world, he made a firm promise that never again would he join in any public worship where this supreme mystery was ignored. He has kept his word.

For the moment he went no further. He was breathless with the new experience. He told nobody. He discussed the matter with no human being, whether in French or in English. Nobody at Jouarre knew what had happened until after he had left. That he was starting on a pilgrimage he felt, but he did not want to be pushed on the way. All he knew was that for himself as well as for the Abbey he had discovered the secret of permanence.

XXIV

Paris

One might think that so great a mental movement as belief in the Real Presence would at once carry X. on to logical developments. As a matter of fact it did not. For one thing, the mind cannot cleave an unimpeded way through the debris of fallen prejudices and traditions. Or, to vary the metaphor, it took some time to free Lazarus from the grave cloths even after he was raised from the tomb. But a further reason was a fresh series of impressions from Catholic life in Paris.

Wrong music.

He now for the first time attended the grand ceremonies of High Mass, with the very elaborate music then customary. He was not attracted by either. Later on, when he came to learn the meaning of the ceremonies, he could enjoy them in a way as part of the poetry of corporate expression of worship; but to this day the simpler a function is the more he likes it. As for the music, it seemed to him quite inappropriate. Of that kind of music he thinks the same still, and was very glad when he found that the Catholic Church has always condemned it, and that it had become customary merely through the presumption of musicians who, either untrained in ecclesiastical instinct or resistant thereto, claimed the right to impose musical forms of their own on a Liturgy which the Church rightly keeps within her own control. The age-long tug-of-war between the Church and her refractory musicians can, of course, have but one ending. It is only one form of the everlasting strife between Principle and Pleasure. At any rate X. found that, while such music tickled

the ear, it disgusted the spirit, and by forcing itself on the attention made prayer almost impossible.

Silent prayer.

If that kind of worship had been essential, X. would have been repelled, perhaps for years, perhaps for ever. But one day he wandered into the church of Notre Dame des Victoires. It was an ordinary afternoon, but the church was very full, almost crowded. Thinking there was going to be Benediction or Vespers, X. waited and waited. People came, and people went. Some were saying the rosary silently: some kneeling and bowing their heads, not caring to conceal their emotion: some sat and were obviously using books as an aid to meditation. At last X. went and asked the *suisse* what function was expected and when it would begin. He replied, "There is no function on; they just come here to pray; it is almost always like this." X. looks upon this as the grandest function he has ever attended, the one in which there was no ceremonial at all. There they all were in their hundreds—gentlemen, business men, porters, ladies, shop-girls, and a few children—not called together by any signal or any exercise of authority or any routine, but simply coming to the Presence, each to be alone with his Lord, each with his own needs or sorrows or joys—the perfection of individual with corporate action. France is a country of wonderful surprises. X. left Notre Dame des Victoires feeling that the secret of permanence for the cloister is also the centre of gravity for the whole system.

A French home.

X. was further fortunate in seeing a French Catholic home. Miss Makepeace, after being governess for years in the De Machy family, had become their loved and valued friend. On her account X. was received by them as a welcome guest. The picture of that home became more definite in subsequent visits, but the first impression remained substantially the same,

so that it will be no departure from the truth to add some of the later colourings, especially as it is not easy now to distinguish the happenings at his various visits.

Children. The experience was important to him, because among the superstitions current in England at the time was a belief that the French did not know home-life. "Why, they haven't even a word for home in their language," it used to be triumphantly said. So France gave him another surprise. This particular home was almost patriarchal in character. M. De Machy was a director of the Bank of France, and his wife was a typical "great lady," gentle and dignified. Two of the sons were married and were there with their families. Two others were young bachelors. The daughter had married the Count de Béarn, but was now a youthful widow. At lunch, which the French people call breakfast, the large table was very well filled. The old grandfather at the head had on his right a rather important visitor, and these two were gravely discussing some current phase of politics or finance. Next to the visitor sat a little girl of six or seven. Suddenly her childish treble piped up with a story about one of her dolls, and it was addressed to Grandpa. The two old gentlemen stopped their conversation, listened to her, answered her with as much courtesy as if she were a grown-up princess, paying her the compliment of not smiling because she herself was serious, allowed her to finish her little talk to her full content, and then went back to the affairs of France. It was pretty.

English was well known in the house. The second generation spoke it as perfectly as it is spoken in England. *Punch* and other English papers lay on the table. The third generation was learning it by having certain days on which they had to speak English alone as best they could. It happened to be one of these days when X. spoke

in French to a tiny boy of four or five. Although nobody else was within hearing, the child with ready obedience answered, " I cannot spik Frrench !"

Father and daughter.

There is one virtue which no Frenchman seems ever to lose—reverence for his mother. As they are naturally demonstrative, it is pleasant to watch them showing this reverence at home. Even more charming is the relation between father and daughter. The Countess de Béarn, on her husband's death when she was little more than a girl, had gone more or less into seclusion and devoted herself to beneficence. All her jewels she had set in strings around the chalice and ciborium of her private chapel. One of her forms of charity was to have a number of orphan protégées placed in different orphanages, because she wanted each to feel an individual relation towards herself. Nor did she pay for these in annual lump sums; the whole account for each child, down to the smallest article of clothing, had to be sent to her just as if it were an expensive boarding-school. The phrase " cold as charity " is not understood in France. One evening X. noticed that, during the exercise of this maternal solicitude, she was knitting her brows over an arithmetical puzzle. She could not square this little account of pennies and halfpennies. Her old father left his easy chair by the fire, came and sat alongside of her, and straightened out the tangle for her, dealing as gravely with the petty items as he was accustomed to do with the millions of the Bank of France. Pretty, again.

There was, of course, nothing exactly new in such phases of home life, but X. had rarely seen all these family virtues so harmoniously combined, and it was a lesson to him to be made to feel how the Catholic Faith adapts itself as naturally to the sweet liberties of home as to the austere discipline of the cloister.

XXV

A Pause for Thought

Before leaving Paris X. called on the English Passionists with a letter of introduction. They gave him a copy of Hay's *Sincere Christian instructed in the Written Word*. It is an admirable compendium, and he read it leisurely, being more inclined to think than to argue. The new idea of the Real Presence was bound to lead him somewhere, but he was afraid of being rushed. So he rested a bit to analyse, like a climber somewhat out of breath turning at a bend in the path to "have a look at the view."

A contemporary analysis.

Some might think that these bits of analysis are rather the fruit of subsequent reflection than a transcript of actual thoughts at the time. To some extent that is probably true. A process partly subconscious becomes more clearly defined when looked back upon, but that the process was really there may be seen from the following portion of a letter which X. wrote to his mother. He left Jouarre on April 24, and the letter was written on May 5.

"Of course you will have observed from the tone of my last letter, and will observe still more from the present one, that my visit to France has had some effect on my character. I have analysed that effect and shall try to explain it to you.

"But first I must make a little *exposé* of my state of mind previously, which I did not tell you for three reasons: (1) because I was ashamed of it and felt it would pass away, as it has done; (2) because it would grieve you, and make you think worse of

me than I perhaps deserved; and (3) because after two months I should certainly have advanced in one direction or another and your answer would be no longer applicable.

"To put it shortly, I was harassed with the most terrible doubts as to the reality of religion, as to the truth of revelation, I may say even as to the existence of an immortal soul in man. This shocks you, no doubt; so does it me now, and so did it when I felt most overwhelmed. But they presented themselves to me in the course of studying science, and I must attack them. Had I hushed them up without examination, I should have felt as if I had left an unconquered Canaanite behind. Don't think that I ever deserted Gospel truths: I clung to them as a child to its mother, but I had the horrible dread which a child will have, that they would not be sufficient to protect me. I prayed earnestly for a solution of my doubts; but (to my shame I say it) I was almost driven to that famous sceptic prayer, 'O God, if there be a God, save my soul, if I have a soul.' [There was probably a little unconscious exaggeration in this.]

"It is no use enquiring how this state of mind came about. I can trace the steps myself, but could not explain them. At last, the very night before I went to Jouarre, my worst doubt presented itself in its worst form, and I was enabled to find what seemed to me to be the logical solution of it. Had I not got this, nothing else would have been of any avail: but having got it, it was not enough—logic never brought a man faith. What I wanted was personal contact with real religion."

A little explanation and apology is here desirable. The word "real" must have caused X.'s mother some pain, as if it implied that the religion of his upbringing had not been real. But like many another youth he was so intent on his own meaning

that he failed to consider the effect of his words on others. The word had acquired a new meaning for him, which he did not know how else to convey. Certainly the very last thing to enter his mind would be to hurt his mother's feelings. There was no criticism intended, but the thought was very imperfectly expressed. To go on with the letter:

"Of course, the proper course was 'Take it to the Lord in prayer': but my very prayers were defiled by the residuum of my doubts. The remedy I wanted God in his goodness provided at Jouarre. I told you what religion I found there, and I bless God for it. This convinced me of the reality of religion; that came first.

"But what religion? And here I must be cautious not to convey to you ideas that I do not mean; so pray do not misunderstand me. The religion, I answer, of Christianity on the basis I have often tried to hold it, of unsectarianism. You know I have told you my opinions on this subject; how I think the Bible, being infinite thoughts expressed in finite language, cannot be wholly grasped by finite man; how truth, being many-sided, can only be partially comprehended. You know that I never could find a sect whose views of the Truth of God I could concur in wholly. . . . Further, I never pretended or wished to pretend that my view of Truth is better than anybody else's; but it seemed to me that my view more nearly coincided with the Church of England than any other, and therefore I showed a preference for that Church. . . . While I held that view, I thought that the Roman Catholics had so glaringly perverted Truth that as a Church they did not deserve to be called on the side of Truth; that if a Roman Catholic got on the right track, it was a fluke, a mere chance. I frankly confess I was wrong: the Roman Catholics do not believe half, and do not practise a quarter of what we

Protestants accuse them. And I now believe that Roman Catholicism, just as Protestantism, grasps a very wide share in multiform truth; and that it is as much in accordance with the Word of God as is Protestantism.

"Don't think I go further. I hold what I held before, only on a larger basis, and it is to be hoped with enlarged charity. At any rate it has given a stimulus to my religious life, to my love of God, which I pray may not be transient, but may bear the fruits and the growth which are the only signs of life.

"This is all very different from what you have all along taught me, and therefore no doubt you will be grieved and alarmed at my notions. However that may be, please do not think that I am dissatisfied with what you have taught me, or that I wish to disparage your view of Truth because I cannot accept all its details. But I must follow the line in which I believe God is leading me, and for which my intellect and nature has been formed."

XXVI

Enquiry and Study

Wrong music again a drawback.

True to his promise at Jouarre, X., on his return to London, frequented the Catholic church nearest to his lodgings, the Passionist Retreat at Highgate. The services did not help him much. The preachers were mostly foreigners who could not express their thoughts easily in English, and those who were not foreigners never seemed to catch his point of view. Whenever they explained things to outsiders they spoke to Anglicans of the High variety. There seemed to be a want of knowledge of the state of mind in "Evangelical" circles. Strange, because "High" Anglicanism, forty or fifty years ago, was mostly confined to the clergy, and the point of view of the average Englishman (if he had any religion at all) was of the "Evangelical" type, whether inside or outside of the Establishment. Moreover, the altar decorations were very tawdry and effusive: they were in the hands of a French barber. And the music was not only more offensively inappropriate than that of Paris, but was very poorly rendered—two or three good voices supported by an untrained mob. Such a choir, uttering simple sacred music, would have been quite effective; but, attempting intricate fugues and colossal climaxes, it was only a hindrance to devotion.

Questions.

However, in spite of these drawbacks, the process of search and enquiry went on. In a very few days he put three questions to M. Legendre of Jouarre—and the fact that there

were only three questions shows how far he had travelled: he has the answer still, dated May 8, 1876 —*i.e.*, three days later than the letter already quoted to his mother. The three questions were: (1) the Immaculate Conception, (2) the doctrine of Purgatory, and (3) the lot of children who die unbaptised. The answer did not directly convince him. It took a logical form which repelled him. There was something that he was groping for but could not grasp, and this indeed was expressed in the letter, but thrown into the form of a parenthesis, whereas it should have been the main theme. But the letter impressed him nevertheless for its courtesy and humility, and for one or two practical hints which bore much fruit.

Why the answer was ineffective.

The letter, which X. appreciates much more now than he did then, began by laying down with proof two preliminary principles: (1) the teaching authority of the Church, and (2) tradition. After that, the answers to the questions go without saying. But it was precisely those principles that were in question. All these words—teaching, authority, Church, tradition—have a vastly different connotation to a Protestant mind from what they have to a Catholic. It was like talking to a blind man about colour. Almost impatiently he threw the letter aside, with the thought that if he held those principles there would be no questions. What is the Church? How does it teach? How does it exercise its authority? What is meant by its traditions? For him, as for all other Protestants, the "Church" was only an abstraction. Therefore for him the letter bore no cogent meaning. There was too much about Popes and Fathers, and too little about the Mystery of the whole Body. Yet one part of the letter did express that, but as it was thrown into the form of a parenthesis it did

not receive due attention. This is the passage: ". . . The Christian people (the Mystical Body of which Jesus Christ is the Head and in which he perpetually causes the sensing of the life of his Holy Spirit)." If this had been made the main theme of the answer, the end (or rather the beginning) would probably have come several days sooner.

One sentence gave a deep impression of humility and of a sense of responsibility which weighed more than all the arguments. Perhaps it may be given in French—translation spoils it: " Maintenant, bien cher Monsieur, je vous remercie de l'honneur que vous me procurez de traiter auprès de vous de ces questions. Je prie Notre Seigneur de me faire la grâce d'y répondre toujours dans son esprit."

The letter had also a suggestion which bore immediate fruit: " The library of any Catholic priest in London ought to be a great help to you. But in such matters our great resource should be that of prayer. We must keep our soul open towards the side of Heaven. He who feeds the birds of the air will not withhold the bread of truth from his own child."

Starting on the Fathers.

The need of prayer was already felt, but that library was a suggestion. X. knew no priest in London, nor would he go to see one until he could feel his way more clearly. But near University College there was a Free Library established by a Dr. Williams (blessings on his name!), where students could not only read, but were allowed to take home four volumes at a time. This library had the full set of Anglican translations of the Fathers, and here X. began a course of study which lasted for months even after he had become a Catholic. It has been recorded how in his early childhood he had been checked in a passionate desire to learn something of the Apostles more than Scripture tells. The

passion now suddenly returned. He read and read with an absorbing fascination, not for dogmatic or academic reasons, but in order that he might have at first hand a living picture of Christianity as it grew through the first three centuries. Needless to say it was no form of Protestantism he found there. Indeed, as he had already found this to be unscriptural, he was not surprised to find it also unhistorical.

A letter from Newman.

Other books too he read; among them Newman's *Apologia*. After reading it, he had the audacity to write to Newman himself, saying that in the book he had raised a question which he had not answered. This little difficulty was a further mark of progress. It was that perhaps Mary herself in Heaven might not like the "excessive" honour paid to her on earth. He is now glad that one of his last difficulties was an endeavour to look at things from the blessed Virgin's point of view rather than his own. Newman's answer was characteristic. By return of post (how the unknown student appreciated that courtesy!) he replied that the matter had been fully dealt with by him in his letter to Pusey, and therewith he sent a copy of that letter, which is one of X.'s treasured possessions to this day. Years afterwards, when Newman received the Cardinal's hat in Rome and X. was a student there, he took the opportunity to express his gratitude, and the new Cardinal replied, "It is very kind of you to renew such a memory on an occasion like this." Did anybody ever get the better of Newman in either humility or courtesy?

XXVII

On the Threshold

Drawing nearer. During these days of strain there was no argument. X. felt instinctively that the critical argumentative attitude was not, for him, conducive to the acquirement of truth. The certitude that the Real Presence was part of the Word of God made it necessary for him to draw near to it. But the way seemed to be strewn with stumbling-blocks. It was a choice between the Anglicans, the Orientals and the Catholics. He went to St Alban's, the high-water mark of Anglicanism, and found that they did not dare to assert the fulness of the Mystery. It was his last experiment in that direction. As for the Orientals, they were very far away, and they seemed to have nothing that the Catholics could not give. So the only practical way was to find out whether the stumbling-blocks in the path towards Catholicism were really as insuperable as his prejudices made them out to be. So many of these stumbling-blocks had already turned out to be really stepping-stones instead, that his hopes grew. But he would not argue.

Argument no use. His progress was duly reported to Jouarre, until Miss Makepeace one day thought a little argument might help. It didn't. She did not "touch the spot." She wrote: "And now, my dear Fred, one word on religion. In your letter you represent yourself as being in a state in which it is impossible to remain. *You* must have some firm religious

belief—you must belong to *some* Church. . . . For myself, I would trouble no one's conscience, but you are in a state of doubt, and therefore to you I should say *search*. Search the Scriptures: you will find no Protestantism there, but a positive commandment to 'hear and obey the Church.' The only thing for you is to find out 'the Church'—there can be but *one*. May you, dear Fred, find it." This friendly little push, or rather pull, was a tactical mistake. X. was not in a state of doubt: he *was* searching. He saw no cogency in the sentence, "You must belong to *some* Church." He already knew that there was no Protestantism in holy Scripture. Everybody seemed to assume that everybody else knew what is meant by the word "Church": and that was precisely what nobody would or could tell him. Miss Makepeace's influence did not really tell on him till after he had become a Catholic. Then it became very great, for she was (as Madame De Machy said) an *âme de choix :* and his gratitude for that influence is recorded on the brass tablet in the sanctuary of St Mary's, Cape Town, where her name occurs among the donors of the first stained-glass window in that church. With her niece, who was not a Catholic, X. had no discussion at all on religious matters. In his letters he simply recorded his progress.

"Under instruction."

About the middle of May so many difficulties had been removed that X. called at the Passionist Retreat, Highgate, and asked to see one of the priests. He saw Father Vincent Grogan. He did not offer himself as a catechumen, but simply asked permission to discuss some of the obstacles still in his way. Father Vincent was a dear, good man, but he too failed to see where the trouble really lay. The concept of a "Church" was assumed on one side, but did not exist on the other. After one or two interviews,

an appointment was made for Pentecost Eve (June 3), when X. was to lay before this priest some three or four final difficulties.

The Pentecostal novena.

At that juncture there came May 25, Ascension Day. X. knew nothing about the custom of Novenas, but he saw in Scripture that all the disciples spent those ten days in prayer for the light of the Holy Spirit. He dropped all further intellectual enquiry, and did what he could to spend those days in fasting and prayer. It was during that time he said his first "Hail Mary." Catholics, to whom it is as natural to say this as it is for a child to say good-morning to his mother at home, can hardly believe with what conditions and restrictions this act was hedged around. About the middle of the Novena, when X. paused to reflect on the "difficulties" which he was to lay before Father Vincent on Saturday, he found that they had melted away. He could not even put himself back in the position in which they had been difficulties. He had not yet any clear ideas of a "Church," but he felt he had experience of a "Life," from which it was now his prayer that he might never fall away. The pattern which he had been so laboriously studying from the back he now suddenly saw on the right side. From that day to this he has never felt a mental question as to this Pentecostal light.

Full light at last.

On June 3 (a day which was afterwards to be his ordination day, and which became also the anniversary of Miss Makepeace's death), he came to Father Vincent and said, "The difficulties I had to propose to you have simply vanished: I have much to learn, but I have nothing to question: I want to become a Catholic." It was arranged that he should be received on June 14, and should make his first Communion the next day, the Feast of Corpus

Christi. He made it, since Father Vincent was saying Mass there, in the Convent Chapel along with the little first communicants of the Convent School. He little knew then how much of his life's work would be with these lambs of Christ's flock.

XXVIII

Correspondence with Home

To so strongly a Protestant household as X.'s has been shown to be, the tidings of his having passed over to the Catholic Church could not be anything else than intensely painful. In communicating the intelligence X. doubtless made some mistakes of judgement owing to the crudity of youth and the difficulty of adjusting his new perspective to the view of his correspondents. It was equally natural that the replies should contain a good deal of acrimony. In giving extracts from this correspondence, both crudities and acrimonies shall be omitted, but it seems well to show that in the clash of convictions there was no loss of affection.

The announcing letter to his parents said: "Your letters I have just received, in answer to mine after returning from France, and I must confess I thought you would say more about it. You say you prayerfully leave me in God's hands and feel convinced that on many points God will give me more light in due time. Your prayer has been answered, though not in the way you desired. My present letter will contain the most important news I have ever told you—one which will perhaps be an intense grief to you, if God will it not otherwise, but one which gives me the greatest happiness of my life. My last letter gave you a very broad hint of it: I have done my best gradually to prepare you for it. In my letter of May 5 I said I thought that Catholicism was *as much* in accordance with the Word of God as Protestantism: now I think it is *more so*—in fact, that it is the only one which is so.

Being thoroughly convinced of this, what was there for me to do but to join the Catholic Church? And I have done so. I am utterly weary of controversy, so I shall not argue any of the doctrines which you think so wrong. . . . I cannot expect to alter your opinion: such a work is in the hands of the Lord. But for myself I am fully and earnestly persuaded that in answer to fervent prayer God has led me to his truth, and I firmly believe he will continue to lead me by his grace. . . . Such are the motives for the step I have taken, and I have done it deliberately, with my eyes open, with my heart wide open to Heaven in prayer, with full knowledge of every argument for and against. [The confidence of youth!] . . . I should even be glad if you made up your minds not to argue—if we pray for each other and let God show the right—if we confine ourselves to common ground and let Jesus be the one exalted object, the view of whom is to shut out all minor differences.

"Doubtless, if you think I have gone wholly astray, you will be deeply grieved, and that is the *trial* which I have had to overcome. My love for you has increased in proportion as I am obliged to pain you: and, believe me, I would do everything possible if, as far as I am concerned, the rest of your lives could have been without care. And, by the grace of God, you shall still see that your Catholic son has a flood of affection for you, which differences of religion will only increase, which worldly trials will only serve to bring out, which advance in years will only make more tender."

From X.'s father: "What shall I say to the contents of your last letter? How shall I answer it? I feel as if I could not write at all, still write I must. Yes, my dear Fred, the tone of your late communications has been such that I began to fear for you, still I was not prepared to hear what you tell us now.

. . . How could I be prepared to hear that you had turned a Roman Catholic without first plainly telling your parents that you intended taking such a most important step? I do not doubt your affection for us, but—though it pains me deeply to tell you, still I must—you have not honoured your father and mother in joining the Roman Catholics without even so much as a previous notice to your now sorrowing father and deeply grieved mother. You above all the other children would have been able to brighten up the remainder of the weary life of your parents, but instead of such a prospect there is now the appalling fact that by your rash step you have struck a deep, deep wound into the hearts of your father and mother, which will bleed until you return to the old right path. . . . And now you, having been fed by the best of mothers from your earliest youth with the pure milk of the Gospel (alas, that my conscience should upbraid me that I have not done for you what I ought to have done! I implore God's pardon)—you, with the light of Scripture and reason richly endowed, you rashly venture the awful step into the gross darkness of Rome. . . . Oh, I beseech you, my dear Fred, be calm, reflect and return, return *at once*, ere it be too late. Do not be ashamed to confess that you have acted too rashly, that you have erred. I cannot do, I cannot say more. I give you over into the mighty hand of God under which I desire to humble myself, until it shall please him to take the veil from your eyes."

The answer from X.'s mother: "I have been sitting for some time with the pen in my hand, not knowing what to write you. When your last letter came, we were all thunderstruck. I could not help saying many times to myself, 'Would to God he had died in infancy!' Poor Papa is quite bowed down with grief. I never saw him so cut up be-

fore. The step you have taken will bring many grey hairs on his head. . . . I know you will not be convinced by anything we may say, and we shall not try to convince you, but God knows how much sorrow you have given us, and I tell you solemnly he will let you know it in your own soul some day too. I look up to Jesus, my glorified Head in heaven (not to the dead Christ on the cross which absorbs your vision), and entreat him to open your eyes to the truth."

There were, of course, other letters from relatives, but these extracts will suffice. X.'s reply will be given in the next chapter. Meanwhile it may be noted how deep a gulf exists between the Catholic mind and the Protestant, even in the essential doctrine of the Incarnation. To a Catholic, the belittling reference to " the dead Christ on the cross which absorbs your vision " causes a shudder. From such a point of view it was necessary for X. to depart.

XXIX

More Letters, and a Partial Close

An answer. Points of controversy inevitably raised in such a correspondence may well be passed over in silence. There is controversy enough in the world without importing it into our reminiscences. But the reproach of not having honoured his parents was very painful to X. and was certainly quite unexpected. If his parents had been within reasonable reach, they would have been informed of his intention on June 3, and would have had ample time for remonstrance before June 14. But to wait two months before obeying what was to him a clear and unconditioned command from God was not to be thought of. He was not under tutors and governors: he was well on to twenty-two years of age. Moreover, he was so far from being dependent on his parents that he was contributing to their support. And indeed after the following letter to his father the point was never brought up again.

X.'s reply to his father: "I have never had a harder letter to answer than this of yours. All the reproaches it contains cut me to the heart, all the love it expresses makes those reproaches more bitter, and the consciousness that I have not deserved them makes them keener still.

"Immediately after my return from France I wrote you a long letter indicating my wavering position: long before I got an answer to it I was a Catholic. I knew how you would feel it, and though I longed to tell you immediately, I thought I would spare you what pain I could, and so resolved

to wait till your answer to my long letter. *Then*, I thought, I should have some indication as to how to break the news. After all the delay, you hardly answered that letter at all, and I saw that I had made a mistake in judgement. I did all out of the kindest consideration for your feelings, and am now told I dishonoured you in so doing.

" If you mean that after I was convinced I ought to have told you and awaited your reply before joining the Church, I frankly tell you I dared not do it. On so important a question, the very day I was convinced was the day of my application for admission. If you still think I did not behave as I ought towards you, my dear father, I humbly beg your pardon and assure you that I never did and never will put any slight upon you wittingly. . . .

" You say, ' you having been fed by the best of mothers, from your earliest youth, with the pure milk of the Gospel ': I quite agree with every word of this, but have I given up the Gospel ? If the Gospel be that God the Father is perfect Justice, perfect Mercy and perfect Love combined; that God the Son came into the world and by his atonement alone we are saved; that God the Holy Ghost came into the world to teach, to vivify and sanctify: then I would die rather than give up the Gospel— and I shall never cease thanking God that I had the best of mothers to teach it me.

" Then you go on to reproach yourself that you have not done enough to teach me the same. There was no need for that self-reproach. It was the Spirit of God who taught you that the best way of teaching your children and your flock was by example. Often when I said nothing I have watched your conduct under various trying circumstances, and every time I did so was a lesson I have never forgotten; and I can now say that I shall never cease thanking God that in the best of fathers he

has given me an intimate knowledge of a life which it will ever be my aim to imitate. I have never known you shirk a duty or omit an occasion of Christian charity in its widest sense: and that is the way you have preached the Gospel to me and to all around you.

"Often as I have thought this, I say it now to you for the first time, though I have said it to others before now; and I say it now, because at a time when we differ in opinion, you might think that there is a wider gulf between us than there is."

The news at Jouarre.

Needless to say, the event was hailed with great joy at Jouarre. Miss Makepeace (who used to write in French at X.'s own request because of the beauty of the language) said: "Il m'est impossible de vous exprimer tout le bonheur que j'ai éprouvé en lisant *vos chères lettres ;* quoique j'attendais impatiemment la bonne nouvelle que vous me communiquez, cependant ma joie n'était pas moins grande en la recevant. Nous avons pleuré de joie et de reconnaissance, et béni le bon Dieu de ses miséricordes toujours inépuisables. Vous le comprenez bien toute l'Abbaye se réjouit avec nous." She then went on to tell him, what he had not known till then, though he thought it probable, that her niece wanted also to be a Catholic. She was received into the Church on July 11, about a month after X.

The last days of Miss M. and her niece.

The remainder of the story of this niece may be told in a few words. Very shortly after becoming a Catholic she felt that the Convent life was (in her own words) "a happiness for which she had always unconsciously longed." She entered the Abbey and on December 8, 1879, was professed as Mother Mary Germaine.

On June 3, 1893, Miss Makepeace died, and Mother Germaine wrote the following letter to X.,

then in Cape Town: "When last I wrote to you [on his mother's death] I little thought I should come so soon again, to seek in my turn sympathy by your side, reviving perhaps at the same time your own late deep sorrow. . . . Within the last month our dear Aunt Emily has been visibly sinking: on the 29th of May she received, as she herself desired, the last sacraments, and yesterday afternoon at half-past one o'clock her happy spirit went forth to meet her Lord. I am writing this at the open window beside her. She looks so beautiful dressed all in virgin white. There is something so calm, happy and innocent upon her dear face. She is to be borne to her last resting-place to-morrow (the day I took the white veil, '78). Dear Auntie will repose in the little cemetery of the parish church here at Jouarre close to us. Then should Heaven ever guide your steps again towards Jouarre I am sure you would go for me who cannot go myself, and pray upon her grave. We must not forget that she was the instrument in the hands of Almighty God to call us two to the true Faith, and by that call, you to the high and holy service of the Altar, and me to the bridal union with our Lord.

"She has done the work that was given her to do, and now it remains for us in gratitude to hasten her release from that terrible world of expiation, that she may the sooner be in the beautiful Paradise of God interceding for those she has left behind.

"The last photo you sent to dear Auntie she received with great pleasure and lately often asked me to pass it to her. She looked at it so long and seemed almost to be talking to you, that I used to think she was bidding you a long last farewell. . . . We were beside dear Auntie to the last: she did not speak; it was a calm, peaceful passing away, two or three gentle sighs and that was all."

Mother Marie Germaine herself died on May 26,

1904. When the religious communities were cruelly turned out of France, the nuns of Jouarre found a resting-place in Belgium. The house was not favourable to health, and they suffered great privations from poverty. Nine of the community died, of whom Mother Marie Germaine was one.

XXX

Vocation

University work. During the year 1876, X. was preparing for the London B.A. in October. Yet, as we have seen, from April onwards for several months his whole study was in the new views of Christianity crowding upon him. Somehow the London University receded into the background as a trivial thing. He attended lectures, but that was about all the study he gave to the examination. The result was that he passed, but did not even try for honours. The University authorities in South Africa were, of course, keenly disappointed in him. And, equally of course, his honourless degree was by many put down to the discredit of his new religion. That was a thing which, he resolved, must be righted. The next examination (the first LL.B.) came in less than three months. X. went to a well-known "coach," Mr. Hunter, author of an excellent manual of Roman law, and said: "It is quite necessary for the credit of my South African University that I take honours this time." Mr. Hunter asked how much X. had read. It was precious little. "Quite impossible," he said. The reply was, "Mr. Hunter, if you don't mind, you and I will try to do the impossible; you mark down each week's work, and I'll undertake to do it." Somehow or other the thing came off, and the Registrar in Cape Town wrote: "Now we understand why you did not take honours in October; you were reading for law all the time and reserved your energies for January." X. never undeceived him, being satisfied with having given

an answer to those who were saying that his new religion had softened his brain.

The old desire revives. For the next few months his University studies went on apace, and he was keeping his terms at the Inner Temple. But in August there came another break. Just as the longing of his childhood had revived, and was now satisfied—namely, that of learning what was to be known about the early days of Christendom; so also the resolve, or the ambition, of teaching the Word of God rose through the débris of uncertainty and came once more to the surface.

Retreat and resolutions. To probe the matter to its depths he went on retreat in a Benedictine monastery in the centre of France. There were circumstances that linked his story with Father Romain of that place. It is called La Pierre-qui-vire, and was the scene of Père Muard's saintly life and death. The two following resolutions were written down at the time:

"August 20, 1877. This morning, after Holy Communion, during the thanksgiving Mass, at the moment of consecration, I have taken a solemn resolution to be devoted entirely to the service of God. I have vowed myself and am no longer at my own disposal: whether to be a priest secular, or priest religious, or simply a religious, I leave to the will of God to determine. And until such time as this resolution can take effect, I resolve to conduct myself as one dedicated to God: my soul, my body, my goods, my talents, my all, are mine no longer: I give myself to God wholly and unreservedly, and may the good God accept the gift. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

"August 22. This morning, after Communion, I fixed my choice on the further question, whether my giving myself to God shall be soon or after some

years. I have decided that, unless the answer I expect from the Cape in October makes it absolutely impossible, it shall be within the next few months. I was in the act of offering up this resolution to God when I heard the Communion read—*Optimam partem elegisti.* [The word really is *elegit sibi*, but the French pronunciation made it sound like the second person.] With thankfulness I accepted this as the confirming voice of the Church, which is as the voice of God. Some may consider this as a mere coincidence, but I love to see the guiding hand of Providence in such mere coincidences. It was by such that I was led to become a Catholic, and if it is by such that I am to become a good priest, so much more to the glory of God: let us not despise the day of small things. Other questions remain to be settled—religious or secular; Europe or Africa; if religious, what Order, etc. At present I feel strongly drawn towards the religious life, and that according to the Benedictine rule, and that as carried out at Pierre-qui-vire. But this must be a matter of much prayer and consideration, and perhaps another retreat. The will of God be done."

Cardinal Manning.

So the London University was once more brushed aside. Why delay when the vocation seemed clear? Let the dead bury their dead. X. took the obvious step of consulting his nearest Bishop, Cardinal Manning. He knew nothing of the state of Catholic affairs in South Africa, did not indeed even know if there was a Bishop, and was not sure if the Protestant world there would wish him to return as a priest. Details need not now be given. Suffice it to say that Cardinal Manning put him at the English College, Rome, that he was there ordained on June 3, 1882, and that shortly after that he was released by the Cardinal for work in his native land.

A fellow-student's letter.

Perhaps the following letter from a fellow-student may throw an oblique light on the anxieties and strains of the time of decision:

"DEAR KOLBE,

"Because you are essentially true, therefore it is that I have, from the first moment I saw you, admired and loved you. And now that you are passing away out of my life, I cannot help sending a line to wish you God-speed in your new life. Sorry indeed I am—you cannot tell how sorry—that you still hold certain doctrines which seem to me irreconcilable with the simplicity of the teaching of our common Lord and Master. Yet still I cannot help feeling glad that the Kolbe I have known is still the same, and does not, *will* not, mind tearing his very heart-strings in doing what he considers to be his duty. As far as you are concerned, I would rather have seen you dead than living a selfish life for no ends higher than those of mere human ambition. All that I want to say to you is simply this, 'Hold the Head.' Our blessed Lord has done all, given all for you; do not then hold back anything, however dear, from him. Don't I know how you love him? Would you be doing what you are doing now, if you did not (erroneously as I think) imagine it was his wish? I haven't got much else to say, and if I had I haven't got the heart to say it. God bless you, old fellow, wherever you may be, and give you grace to know and do his holy will continually, that at the last you may come to his eternal joy and may receive the crown of life laid up for those who are faithful unto death, and enter into the possession of the inheritance uncorrupted and undefiled which fadeth not away.

"Yours affectionately,

"C. F. W. WOOD."

Comment. Such a letter is worth all the controversy in the world, and it suggests to X. to say now that in passing from Puritanism to Catholicism he never gave up any truth or positive doctrine he had once held sacred, and he never turned his back on any friend or any affection. The veil was removed from his eyes and he caught a view of the Bride of Christ in a glory and beauty he had never dreamed of before. He fell in love with her and has remained in love with her ever since.

Your affectionate father
F. W. Kolbe

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XXXI

Signed and Sealed

Letter to his father.

After five years of study concentrated and focussed on the origin, structure, constitution and laws of the Kingdom of Heaven, X. was no longer on the lower slopes, and his story may here come to an end. What he felt at that time he put down in a letter to his father, and with that letter we shall close. This was the last controversial word he ever had with his father, and it is quoted here to show how near to harmony they came in spite of the impassable gulf of thought between them:

"Soon after you get this letter I shall in all probability, God willing, have been ordained to the priesthood. I do not know what I can say about it that will not be distasteful to you; yet I am loth to be quite silent about the end and aim and consummation of my earthly life. Hitherto I have been only preparing: now I proceed definitely to take in hand the plough to which I am called by the great Husbandman: God grant that my furrows may be straight, that I may not look back, and that in the harvest time I may not be found empty-handed! To this, of course, you cannot but say Amen. What you dislike is the *priest*hood. Why should there be a priesthood? Here is the great point of difference between the two religions—for they *are* two, not one. If you knew the blessed Sacrament of the Altar—the greatest marvel of God's love for man—you would acknowledge that it is so important that a religion which has it and a religion which has it not cannot be the same religion. God cannot have given so great a gift to men and

yet be indifferent as to whether it is ignored or not. I said, if you *knew*, for I am quite sure you cannot know of so mighty an outpouring of God's love and yet reject it.

" That our blessed Lord should leave us because it was expedient for us, and yet continue to abide with us; giving us an ever-present fountain of inexhaustible grace; sowing within us the seeds of an immortal resurrection; stilling the tempests of the passions; placing within our reach acts of infinite adoration and thanksgiving which otherwise would be impossible to us; and uniting us to himself, not only by that union which joins our souls to his infinite Godhead, not only by that union of affection whereby we love him with our whole soul, but also by that union whereby we become one flesh and blood with him, being united to him bodily as well as mystically, he being the Vine and we the branches, in a union so marvellous that none but the Heart of God could have first thought of it, that none but the Power of God could ever have accomplished it ! All-powerful as God is, he could not do more for us: all-wise as he is, he could think of nothing better: infinitely rich as he is, he had nothing more to give. So at least thought St Augustine: for when the Lord Jesus gave us this gift, he gave us his Body and Blood, his Soul, his Divinity—all. And thus, instead of giving an account of the institution of this Sacrament, St John simply says, " Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them unto the end "—to the end of his life, to the end of time, to the end of his power, to the end of even the infinite love of God. This is why we have a priesthood: this is henceforth the whole reason of my being—to be the servant of God's greatest mystery.

" I am not arguing: this is no time for argument. Nor am I wantonly laying stress on points of difference. But on ascending the final step, I cannot

keep entire silence. It is due to you, it is due to myself, that I should speak. I go up with fear and trembling because of my own unworthiness: I would rather be a porter in the house of God, if such were God's will, than take this dignity upon myself: but the call of God cannot be gainsaid, cannot be put aside. But if my own sinfulness causes me misgivings for my own sake, I desire to bear witness that on the side of faith I have no misgiving at all. There is not one cloud in the whole sky of my mind whereby I can even conceive it possible to doubt of any single truth taught by the Catholic Church, unless it were by grievous sin and hideous ingratitude towards the God of all truth.

"And especially with regard to the blessed Sacrament, which is the object of my whole life's devotion—even if I knew nothing of the history and teaching of the Church in all ages, if even I knew nothing of the many miracles which the blessed Sacrament has worked from time to time, still I should find it inconceivable that any man could put together all that is said in holy Scripture about it, and consider all dispassionately, and yet pronounce against it, except for one of two reasons: either because he thinks God cannot do it, or because God does not love us enough to do it. And for my part, never will I assign limits either to God's power or to God's love.

"With unwavering faith, therefore, and with hope and love and gratitude, not without fear, I go straight on to what, as far as I can gather with my best efforts, God requires of me. May God help me!"

His father's death.

His father died on Christmas Day, 1899, and in the *South African Catholic Magazine* X. expressed his filial piety by a sketch entitled "A Gentle Life," of which this was the close: "His last hours were in keeping

with his life. Early on Christmas afternoon the word went round to all of us within reach that the end was come. Except that his breath was laboured he seemed to suffer no pain. His speech was slightly impaired by what looked like partial paralysis, but his mind was bright, and now and then we could catch some loving message or some gentle prayer. It was a pain that the Church could do nothing for him outwardly or visibly, yet I did not like to remain altogether silent. Protestantism and Catholicism are so essentially diverse that it is hard for either side to find words charged with feeling which shall be in no way discordant: if you say too little, you seem hard; if you say too much, you seem to intrude. However, I did say to him, "Father, if it be God's will that you go soon, do you desire to testify that you die firm in the faith and hope of our Lord Jesus Christ?" His whole face brightened up and he lifted his hand with energy to eke out the poor broken speech which we could no longer catch, and then in his old way he gave me one more flash with his eye to tell me how glad he was I had so spoken. I truly think that no doubt had ever crossed his mind. All the truths he believed were Catholic truths, and he found so much to obey in them that he never felt the need of more. I feel as sure as I can be of anything in the spiritual world beyond our mortal ken, that his life-long work for God and his never-failing persistence in virtue was the effect of grace and not of nature, and that his end was in harmony with the life divine."

EPILOGUE

The story ends in human concord. If anybody had a right to bitterness over it, it was my own father. Yet we lived for years in the same town, frequently meeting, and we never clashed. It is a great consolation to me that I was enabled to close his eyes in peace.

I have no hope of influencing those who are actively militant—rightly so from their own point of view, for in a world of sin we must fight for what we honestly take to be God's Truth. But there are many who long for the Truth, and nevertheless are overborne by the Spirit of the Age—science, criticism, naturalism, rationalism, modernism—and are reluctantly losing all hold on Faith. To them I have spoken. There *is* a way out, which is also a way upwards. If I have found it, there is no reason why they should not. No one can stop the downward trend of those who leave our Lord Jesus Christ from pride, from lust, from avarice, from sloth, from worldliness. That is the broad road. But it is a pathetic thing to see souls wistfully and reluctantly turning aside from the narrow way, because, owing to prejudice and tradition, they think it is blocked against them. It is not blocked. And the grace of God which brought me into it is just as freely open to them. It is for this reason, and this alone, that I have drawn aside the veil of privacy from a life which otherwise is of no value or importance.

I. O. G. D.

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KOLBE, F.C.

AUTHOR
Up the Slopes of Mt. Sion

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